SELF-ASSESSMENT
REPORT

2016 – 2021

ANECA

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PART I / **BACKGROUND**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA, National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation) was created by Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities. Its mission is to promote and assure the quality of the higher education system in Spain through guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation processes, contributing to the development of the European Higher Education Area, as well as contributing to information and transparency with society as a whole.

ANECA was initially legally established as a foundation, which changed to a consideration as an autonomous body in 2014, due to its evaluation functions of university degrees and university academic s and functions to improve their quality.

The Self-Assessment Report shows ANECA's compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), updated at the Conference of Ministers in May 2015, in addition to some of the main improvements implemented by the Agency in the 2016-2021 period. It is framed within the regular international external review process in which the Agency started to participate in 2007, conducted by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), to then become a registered Agency in 2008 of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), complying with the requirement established by the 2007 London Communiqué of the Bologna Process.

ANECA has been ratified three times since 2007 as a full member of ENQA and has also renewed its registration in EQAR in 2008, 2013 and 2018. On this occasion, it decided to renew through a targeted review process, started in 2021. This represents a new challenge for the Agency, which will be one of the first in Europe to be reviewed under this new model.

To tackle this fourth review, ANECA shall start from the experience gained over the course of the years. The 2015 ESG Standards have already been fully taken on and implemented in all of the Agency's programme and institutional evaluation procedures conducted since the outset. It also applies the 2015 ESG Standards to the new activities it has started up.

The self-assessment process that has led to the present report has been taken on at ANECA as a global, participative and self-critical review tool aimed at determining the real compliance level with the ESG Standards. The process has also led to reflection on future challenges and an analysis of progress made in implementing the recommendations from the previous external review report. The outcome of this process has been greater knowledge of the institution and its activities, both internally and externally.

Below, Table 1 summarises the evaluation activities done at ANECA.

Table 1. **ANECA evaluation activities.**

WITHIN THE SCOPE OF ESG CRITERIA Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions		**OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF ESG CRITERIA Evaluation of Teaching Staff**
ACREDITA	EURO-INF	ACADEMIA
AUDIT	EuroMaster	CNEAI
AUDIT-INTERNATIONAL(*)	Initial Institutional Accreditation(*)	PEP
DOCENTIA	Joint Program Acreditation	Other national and international evaluations
EUR-ACE®	MONITOR	
Eurobachelor	VERIFICA	

(*) New procedures implemented in the period 2016-2021.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The methodology defined to prepare this report was similar to that employed in prior evaluations. The relevant guidelines published by ENQA and EQAR have been have been taken into account. The recommendations of both these institutions were also heeded, both in the 2017 external review, for renewing registration in the Register, and for the 2019 follow-up.

The reference date used for compiling data was the period from 30 June 2016 to 31 December 2021. As an exception, some evidence has been included that was updated through February 2022.

The report contains two types of evidence, which are differentiated by the format and font employed:

- Those that are underlined: contain a link to the public website of ANECA and, specifically, to the document or set of documents.
- Those that are in *italics and underlined*: contain a link to the ANECA cloud, whose entry is at times restricted with a password, given the confidential nature of the information they contain. Panel members have a password to access this information.

ANECA management appointed the team in charge of preparing the Self-Assessment Report. It is made up of staff from the Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit and the Institutional and Programme Evaluation Division, which also participated in the last assessment, with the support of the Agency Internationalisation Committee.

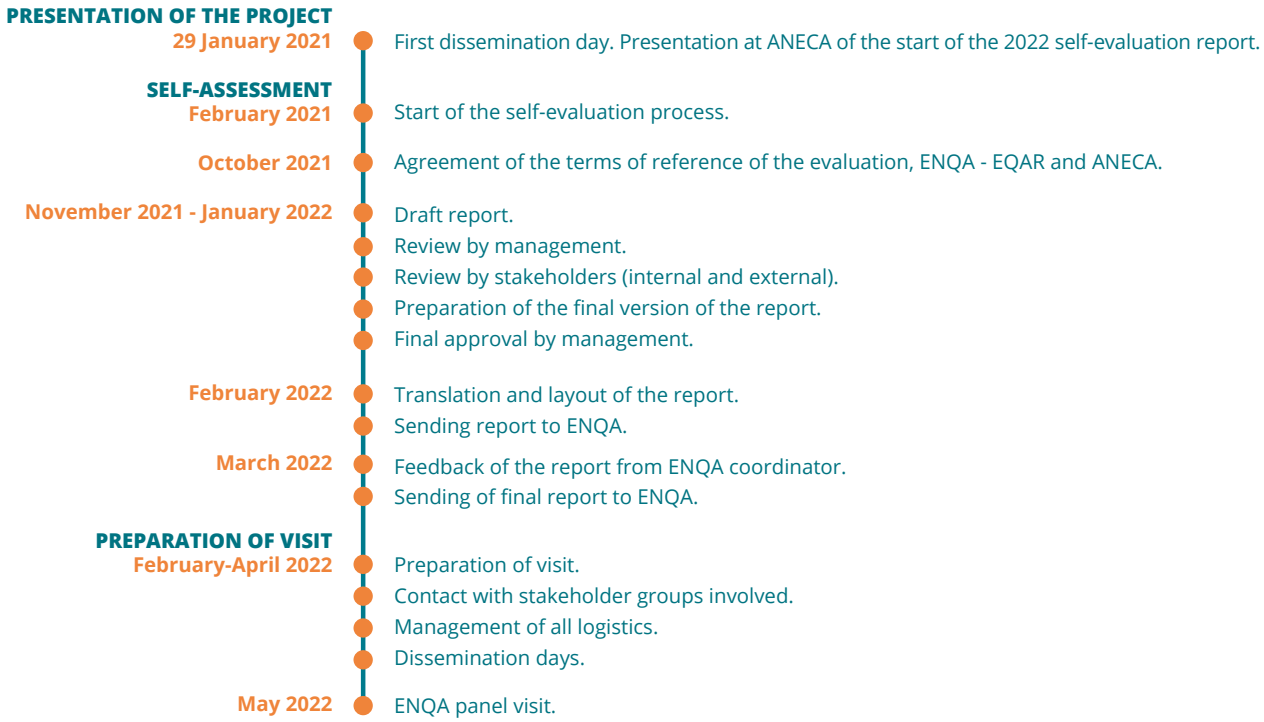
This team coordinated the compilation of evidence and its analysis by a representative group of stakeholders, summarising their appraisals and preparing an initial draft that was distributed for its analysis to a larger group of stakeholders, whose contributions have led to the Self-Assessment Report presented here.

Members of the first representative group of stakeholders who participated in validating the initial draft are the Agency Director, the Chairperson of the Internationalisation Committee and student, rector, business-owner and employee representatives on the Governing Council. The second and larger group of *stakeholders* involved in preparing the report include the plenary Governing Council (including representatives from the competent ministry, from regional governments and social stakeholders), external experts who contribute as national and international experts (academics, students and professionals) on the institutional and programme advisory and evaluation bodies, the Internationalisation Committee in plenary and all of the Agency's staff and management team.

The widespread support provided by ANECA management throughout the process has also led to the greater involvement of everybody who participated in its preparation. Further, several *internal dissemination days* were held with all staff.

Below, Figure 1 shows the timeline followed during the process of preparing the Self-Assessment Report.

Figure 1. **Phases in preparing the Self-Assessment Report.**



3. CHANGES SINCE THE LAST COMPLETE REVIEW

Several relevant events have occurred during the period of time encompassed by the present report (June 2016 - December 2021):

- Change of ANECA management in 2020 due to the end of the term of office of the previous management, as established in the Articles of Association, giving rise to an updating of the Agency, whose main focus is a service vocation and transparency. No structural changes have taken place.
- Preparation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023, which defines the essential action lines during this period.
- Declaration of the state of emergency for handling the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, by Royal Decree 463/2020 of 14 March, amended by *Royal Decree 465/2020* of 17 March, which started on 14 March 2020. A section was created on the ANECA website entitled 'ANECA during the Covid-19 emergency', which contains all updated information related to the Agency's activities and its adaptation to the coronavirus health emergency. These actions were reinforced by the publication of the document ANECA Strategy for Quality Assurance in Online Education, whose aim is to drive the adoption of criteria for quality assurance according to international standards.
- Starting at that time, teleworking was established for internal staff and for all evaluation committees. Further, visits to universities, the training of experts, and so forth, started to be done online. This working method continues to be implemented at the Agency on the date of preparing this report.
- The publication of the following laws and regulations:
  - Royal Decree 640/2021, of 28 July, the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres.
  - Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university programmes and the procedure for quality assurance.

At the time of writing this report, ANECA is working together with the other regional quality agencies to analyse the impact that these changes in the regulatory framework will have on the Agency's programmes. Such changes will mainly affect evaluation guides and computer applications, among others.

3.1. New external quality assurance activities

During the 2016-2021 period, two new evaluation procedures were started and implemented, under the scope of the ESG, which ANECA reported as substantial changes:

- **INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION:** institutional accreditation of university centres was introduced in the Spanish legal framework for university in 2015, as an alternative accreditation model applied to official university degrees, on the basis of which this procedure began to be developed.

  The aim of this type of accreditation is to take a further step towards strengthening the autonomy of university institutions by demonstrating that the university centre fulfils its legal responsibility to ensure the quality of its academic offerings.

  ANECA assesses applications for institutional accreditation of university centres in two phases:

  - a first phase of Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION which takes advantage of the synergies of the evaluation by means of the programmes AUDIT (certification procedure for the implementation of the IQASs) and ACREDITA (procedure for the renewal of the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's degrees) programmes.

    This first phase does not involve an additional evaluation, but consists on a verification by the Agency that the university centre has passed the degree accreditation renewal processes and is certified in AUDIT.
  - The second phase of the Renewal of the INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION of university centres, which has not yet been initiated pending the new regulatory development of the recently approved Royal Decree 640/2021 will involve a specific evaluation process by the Agency. Its design is expected to be finalised by early 2022, as the renewal process for those centres that obtained their initial accreditation in 2018 starts in 2024.

- **AUDIT INTERNATIONAL.** The AUDIT International Procedure has been designed by ANECA in response to the demand from various international organisations to certify the quality assurance systems of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) located in third countries and/or geographical

regions, as a proven tool contributing to the improvement of the quality of their degrees and, therefore, of the satisfaction of their stakeholders.

The main goal of the AUDIT International Programme is for HEIs to design and implement Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAs) that apply the same standards used in the AUDIT Spain Programme, based on the ESG 2015, but adapted to the local context and laws and regulations, so as to enable their use, while maintaining the rigour of a commonly-used standard among HEIs in the countries included in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

3.1.1. Activities in the design phase (to be added to the EQAR register in the future)

In a forward-looking perspective, the agency is working on in two projects, currently in an initial pilot phase. Both procedures follow the common methodology of International Quality Labels (IQL, or SIC in Spanish) such as EUR-ACE®, EURO-INF, Eurobachelor and Euromaster. These procedures are:

- **The Distance and Blended Education Label (ENPHI®):** the first label designed for execution exclusively by ANECA. The Agency grants this certificate to a university for an Bachelor's or Master's degree (all fields) taught via distance or blended learning, evaluated by standards defined pursuant to principles of quality, relevance, transparency, recognition and mobility considered at the European Higher Education Area. Both degrees that are Spanish and from other countries can apply for these international certifications.
- **International Quality Label for WFME Medical Studies**: to grant this label, ANECA works with the National Conference of Medical School Deans (CNDFME) and the General Council of Official Medical Associations (CGCOM). The assessment model for this new label is based on applying the criteria of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), as well as those generally established in the evaluation processes of other IQL managed by ANECA.

As part of the design process for these procedures, proposed protocols and guides were drawn up, which were tested during 2021 in a closed pilot experience for each of them. Thus, the procedures are not open to universities, as experiments are only being conducted with a sampling of selected universities.

The meta-evaluation of the pilot experiences is scheduled for the first four months of 2022, after which the definitive protocols and guides can be approved. Once the pilot is completed, the new evaluation procedures will be reported to the EQAR Register and the procedures will then be offered and open to universities.

In addition, there are two other institutional evaluation procedures that are in an incipient design phase (the working groups are currently preparing proposals of possible criteria and indicators), which will later be followed by a pilot experience prior to their implementation. Both labels will be defined in a new working line for Integral Quality Recognition (IQR) that ANECA plans to start in 2022:

- **Label of Excellence in Inclusion with a Label for Inclusion of People with Disabilities:** ANECA and the ONCE Foundation, together with a group of university experts and leading national institutions, are developing a new Label of University Excellence in Inclusion. This label seeks to recognise the actions implemented to further inclusion at universities.
- **Employability and Entrepreneurship Label**: ANECA, together with a group of university experts and leading national institutions, as well as student and business representatives, is developing a new Label of University Excellence in Employability and Entrepreneurship. This label seeks to recognise the actions implemented to improve the employability of university graduates, with the further aim of creating an impetus for those universities whose purposes do not include this objective.

PART II / **FOCUS AREAS**

4. PROFILE, MANNER OF FUNCTIONING AND EQA ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY RELATED TO THE FOCUS AREAS OF PART 3 OF THE ESG.

4.1 ESG Standard 3.1. Activities, policy and processes for Quality Assurance.

After receiving the external review report from ENQA and the subsequent decisions from the ENQA Board and EQAR Register Committee (2017), ANECA's internal evaluation team kept working on the improvement analysis, implementation and follow-up process. In 2019, it prepared a follow-up report which was submitted to ENQA in October of the same year.

With regard to partial ESG compliance, which was identified by EQAR and substantially ESG compliant by ENQA, the Agency has defined and carried out the following actions to achieve full compliance with the two criteria.

Table 2 shows the compliances related to standard 3.1; table 11 shows partial and substantial compliances of standard 2.6. Annex II also includes information on other improvement actions carried out in the Agency and based on the recommendations suggested in the last external evaluation.

All the evaluation activities under the scope of the ESG that ANECA conducts in Spain fully comply with ESG 3.1, as revealed in the external evaluation reports by ENQA and EQAR.

For evaluation activities conducted outside Spain, the EQAR Committee acknowledged the steps taken by ANECA to clarify their nature, but noted that these activities were not considered by ENQA's external evaluation panel (in particular when examining compliance with Part 2 of the ESG). The EQAR Committee further noted that it could not analyse with complete certainty how the Agency separates these external ESG quality assurance activities from the consulting projects it undertakes.

Therefore, the Committee could not agree with the conclusion of the evaluation panel (full compliance) and considered, after taking into account the clarifications received, that ANECA only partially complied with criterion 3.1.

In order to clarify the nature of these international evaluation activities carried out by ANECA, two different scenarios should be distinguished according to the two types of procedures that the Agency offers to foreign universities:

1. In the case of the AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures: *agreements* can be signed between ANECA and foreign universities, or *agreements* may be signed between ANECA and the different professional bodies/associations/colleges, in which

Table 2. **Substantially and partial compliance ESG Standard 3.1.**

CRITERIA	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	STATUS
ESG 3.1.Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance. (EQAR)	The EQAR Committee acknowledged the steps taken by ANECA to clarify the nature of its international evaluation activities but noted that these activities outside Spain were not considered by the external review panel (in particular in considering compliance with ESG part 2). The Register Committee further noted that it could not analyse with full certainty how the Agency separates these external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG from the consultancy projects it carries out. Therefore, the EQAR Committee remained unable to concur with the review panel's conclusion (full compliance) and considered, after taking into account the clarification received, that ANECA only partially complies with standard 3.1.	ANECA does not provide consulting services to universities in the design and implementation of the ISQAS (AUDIT Program) or in the evaluation of the SIC. ANECA only provides information to universities on how to participate in the programmes and labels. See follow-up report (point 3.1).	Corrected

case the Agency provides support only to the latter and not to the evaluated universities.

It should always be clear that ANECA's commitment is the evaluation of the Internal Systems on Quality Assurance (ISISQAQA) that are designed and implemented at universities. Likewise, in its work to disseminate the AUDIT reference model, ANECA, if requested by the university, can provide training to technical staff, so that they understand the reference model, interpret it properly and can develop their own system.

The Agency's activities do not include any activities related to consulting work. ANECA does not carry out any activity consisting of direct involvement in the design and/or implementation of ISQA, nor in any other activity that could be interpreted as consulting, since its mission is to evaluate and certify different issues of universities' activity. Otherwise a clear conflict of interest would appear towards the party that will be the subject of a subsequent evaluation.

The Agency evaluates and certifies the ISQAs designed and implemented by universities. For this assessment, the same standards of the AUDIT procedure in Spain are applied but adapted to the local setting and legislation, to facilitate their use while always bearing in mind the ESG 2015.

The AUDIT procedure has two clearly differentiated phases:

- **ISQA design phase**

  In the first phase, the universities design the ISQA and its documentation based on the reference model established in the AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedure.

  During this phase, the Agency can train personnel appointed by the university itself to be responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of the ISQAs at schools. The training is aimed at ensuring that personnel are familiar with the reference model and understand the steps involved in the evaluation phase.

  Once the design of its ISQA is finished, the university may apply to ANECA for certification of the design approved by the institution. The evaluation of the ISQA design is conducted by a panel of external experts appointed by the Agency, always guaranteeing their independence and making every effort to avoid any conflict of interest. ANECA carries out important training tasks for its experts, which is done in person in order to provide the experts with all the guides and tools to facilitate a correct evaluation process.

  The design evaluation is conducted online through via an electronic platform developed *ad hoc* by ANECA. The panel of external experts will write their conclusions in a design evaluation report.

  After evaluation, the decision to award design certificates is made by an Agency Certification Committee.

- **ISQA implementation phase**

  During this phase the university will begin to implement all the documentation for the system it certified in the first phase, meaning the procedures and manuals developed.

  The proper implementation of the ISQAs results in an overall improvement of the activities carried out by the institution.

  The university will work towards correct implementation of its system by conducting controls and improving all its processes. After at least six months from the start date, the university may request, if it deems appropriate, certification of implementation's system. To this end, the Agency will provide the necessary training to the panel of external experts so that they can carry out the site visit to the institution. That allows in order to perform the certification audit for ISQA's implementation.

  The external certification audit visit will be made to the schools included in the scope of the ISQA by a team of two external experts selected and trained by the Agency.

  After the audit, the audit team will prepare a report on the status and degree of maturity of the system's implementation.

  Subsequently, the Certification Committee shall assess the appropriateness of granting the system implementation certificate.

2. For the International Quality Labels (IQS) EUR-ACE®, Eurobachelor, EURO-INF and Euromaster

ANECA only performs external quality assurance tasks in the area of quality labels. It does not provide consulting services, as can be seen on its website.

At present, ANECA awards two international labels:

- The EUR-ACE® Engineering Label: ANECA, an agency authorised by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE), together with the Engineering

Institute of Spain (Instituto de la Ingeniería de España, IIE) has a collaboration that promotes the quality and international recognition of Spanish and other countries' bachelor's and master's degrees in the field of Engineering, granting a certificate to a university for a bachelor's or master's degree in Engineering.

- The EURO-INF Computer Science Label: ANECA, an agency authorised by the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE), together with the Spanish General Council of Computer Science Schools (CCII) and the Spanish General Council of Official Schools of Technical Engineering in Computer Science (CONCITI), grants a certificate to universities in Spain and other countries for a bachelor's or master's degree in Informatics.

These certificates are awarded based on the evaluation of a series of defined standards, in accordance with the principles of quality, relevance, transparency, recognition and mobility considered in the European Higher Education Area. The criteria for each procedure are published on ANECA's website.

The evaluation of the label is done jointly by ANECA and the pertinent professional body. Professors and professionals also take part in all external evaluation panels (including students and quality experts), as well as committees like the one that decides the label evaluation process (Mixed Committee) and the one that designs and updates the documentation and procedures applied during these processes (Technical Committee).

The same evaluation procedure is used in Spain and Latin America to assess both EUR-ACE® and EURO-INF, since all EUR-ACE® and EURO-INF graduates, respectively, should obtain the same learning outcomes.

In both cases, the same procedure was implemented:

1. Presentation of the self-assessment report (AR) by the institution applying for the label for each of its degrees. In this report, the institution must explain how the degree meets each of the criteria established in the corresponding evaluation procedure (Self-assessment reports of Latin American degrees).
2. Visit of a panel of external experts (chair, academic expert, professional expert, student and technical secretary) to the university teaching the degree under evaluation. Prior to this visit, panel members organise pre-visit meetings (face-to-face and/or online) to identify the information they need to obtain during the visit. The specific schedule for the visit is agreed upon with the higher-education institution in question. The visit includes, amongst other, interviews with the faculty responsible for the degree, academic staff, administrative and service personnel, students, graduates and employers/representatives of professional engineering organisations. The panel also visits the institution's facilities (libraries, laboratories, etc.) and then reviews all the evidence collected. The visit ends with a meeting between the panel of external experts and the academic staff responsible for the degree at the higher education institution. A second visit may be made to the university for degrees that obtained the label with limitations if the Label Accreditation Committee deems it necessary to verify the full implementation of some issues that initially had partial compliance.
3. The panel chair coordinates the preparation of a specific visit report for each of the degrees under evaluation. All members of the panel of experts agree on the report that assesses each of the criteria established to evaluate the label, set out in the documentation published on ANECA's website that is based on the ESG. Ex-ante accreditation dates are established to determine whether there has been compliance with the recommendations made in the follow-up evaluations conducted prior to implementing the degree.
4. As indicated above, the panel of experts is in charge of the initial evaluation and the visit to the university where the degree is taught. ANECA selects the experts for this panel with academic and student profiles. The selection of external experts with professional profiles is done in collaboration with the corresponding professional institutions. All experts are selected taking into account transparency, the suitability of the persons to the functions to be performed during the evaluation and their *specific training* in the methodology for this evaluation process. ANECA provides the applicant higher education institution with the list of persons that compose the panel of experts and offers a brief curriculum vitae of each member. The institution communicates its acceptance of these members or their

rejection, in the latter case providing justification. In case of rejection, ANECA, in collaboration with the professional institution (if the rejection refers to an external expert with a professional profile), studies the reasons given by the institution and proceeds, if necessary, to modify the composition of the panel of experts that will make the visit. All members of the panel receive prior specific and individualised training on how to evaluate the application for awarding the label. This training is defined by ANECA and the corresponding professional body, and passing it is an essential requirement for all panel members.

5. The report on the site-visit of the panel of experts, the university's self-assessment report and all the information available on the degree programme in question are analysed by the Label Accreditation Committee, which prepares the interim substantiated assessment report. This report is sent to the higher education institution, which may submit pleas or appeals it deems appropriate, as well as an action plan, if applicable, within twenty days. The purpose of this action plan (improvement plan) is to identify the actions, responsible parties and phases to be implemented by the higher education institution to correct or improve the matters considered in the interim report received. Once the resources and the *action plan* are received, the Label Accreditation Committee reviews them and prepares a reasoned final assessment report and makes its decision regarding the awarding of the label. The higher education institution in question shall be notified of the decision. This report will include all the recommendations for improving the degree that were detected by the Label Accreditation Committee. The final reports of EUR-ACE® and EURO-INF are published on ANECA's website.
6. The Label Accreditation Committee is made up of professors, professionals and foreign external experts. As in the case of the panel of experts, ANECA selects the experts with academic and student profiles for this committee. The selection of external experts with a professional profile is done in collaboration with the corresponding professional institutions.
7. The evaluation procedure that ANECA, together with the corresponding professional body, offers to the institutions, includes the possibility of appealing decisions about the label. The university may appeal the decision of whether or not to award the label within thirty days. Once the appeal is received, the ANECA Appeal Committee reviews and discusses it before issuing its final decision.

Table 3. **Number of evaluations carried out in ANECA procedures.**

	PROGRAMME EVALUATION							INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION			
				SIC							
YEAR	VERIFICA	MONITOR	ACREDITA	EUR-ACE®	EURO-INF	EUROBACHELOR	EUROMASTER	INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	DOCENTIA	AUDIT	AUDIT-INTERNATIONAL
2016	219	77	239	25	5	0	0	-	4	13	-
2017	241	159	251	27	4	0	0	-	4	8	2
2018	165	102	213	54	1	0	0	23	20	22	9
2019	218	32	276	54	17	2	0	9	6	20	8
2020	215	37	164	60	16	4	0	5	9	26	8
2021	719	66	111	153	22	10	0	8	8	24	6
TOTAL	**1,777**	**473**	**1,254**	**373**	**65**	**16**	**0**	**45**	**51**	**113**	**33**

8. After each call for applications has concluded, a *meta-evaluation* process has been conducted since 2018, resulting in improvement proposals that are incorporated into the different evaluation processes. ANECA analyses all the improvement proposals received from universities, collaborating institutions, academic experts, professional experts and student representatives.

4.1.1. Evaluation activities

Regarding external evaluation activities, the number of evaluations conducted in ANECA procedures under the scope of the ESG during the last five years (since the Agency's previous external evaluation report), are shown in the table 3.

4.6. ESG Standard 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct (Selected enhancement area)

In order to select the improvement to be included in this report, an internal analysis and consultation was conducted with stakeholders represented in the ANECA Governing Council (where there are representatives from universities, academic staff, the student body and the administration). After the consultation, the criterion that best represented the improvements made in ANECA was **ESG 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.** This is a backbone criterion for all the Agency's procedures that addresses – in a cross-cutting way – responsibility, professionalism and commitment to service to stakeholders and society as a whole.

This reflection was also done based on the fundamental pillars of the ANECA Strategic Plan 2019-2023:

- Improve the quality of the service provided by the Agency to the university community and society as a whole, in order to increase stakeholders' degree of satisfaction.
- Establish a management policy based on the principles of efficiency and satisfaction of the public service provided.
- Implement human resources strategies focused on intensifying the human team's motivation and commitment to the organisation, to achieve the maximum performance of the intellectual and productive capital of the people who are part of the Agency.

The chosen option shows the Agency's commitment to improving its own practices; it expresses the necessary coherence that must exist between the ANECA Strategic Plan, the Agency's mission, vision and values and the series of activities carried out.

On the one hand, these foundations are reflected in our **mission**, which establishes ANECA's commitment to society by providing information and generating confidence in our stakeholders, as well as relying on their contributions for the creation of synergies; our **vision**, which points out the clear orientation of serving society as a whole, to be an essential part of its concerns and needs; and our **values**, which include transparency and people's responsibility, professionalism and ethics.

On the other, the proximity to stakeholders, transparency and social responsibility promoted in the Strategic Plan and reinforced with the principles of the new management have become the core areas over the course of the years that lead to the cross-cutting improvement of all ANECA procedures. This is especially reflected in actions such as boosting our external communications, strengthening the Electronic Office, creating the ANECA_responde channel, improving the publication of thematic reports and analyses, making the information on the institutional transparency portal more accessible, introducing equality and social inclusion in our evaluations, generating actions aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and promoting a new code of ethics in which academic integrity is highlighted, among other actions aimed at continuous improvement.

These pillars, commitments, cross-cutting core areas and specific actions linked to **ESG 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**, are in turn reflected in the SWOT analysis included in the 2021 self-assessment report, where the Agency's digital transformation is identified as a **strength**, among others. Conversely, the bureaucracy of the processes managed by ANECA were flagged as a **weakness**, which must be reduced to achieve greater agility in the procedures. The rapid evolution of the conditions in which we provide our services was identified as a **threat** and our proximity to stakeholders (transparency) was identified as an **opportunity**. Thus, **ESG 3.6** is chosen as ANECA's **prominent area for improvement** which, in turn, has a cross-cutting impact on all of the ESG as a whole:

- Our proximity to stakeholders makes us accountable for our actions and ensures that we cooperate suitably with the competent authorities of universities and administrations, thus strengthening our status and the recognition of the institutions.
- Our transparency has led us to publishing both the evaluation protocols and reports on the website, as well as the internal quality policy.

- Social responsibility encourages ANECA to conduct its work in accordance with high levels of training, professionalism, ethics and integrity, both of our staff and of the external experts and other people who collaborate with the Agency, avoiding intolerant or discriminatory attitudes, taking on our continuous improvement, guaranteeing that the services we provide to institutions and society are optimal.

4.6.1. Internal Quality Assurance of the Agency

ANECA has created a quality team in charge of internal quality assurance. Owing to cross-cutting measures and continuous improvement, actions have been taken to improve the traceability of the Agency's evaluation processes. Concretely, a review of the Quality Management System was conducted, updating all the procedures so that the relevant information on this activity can be accessed, incorporating web links to the guides or public documents on the procedures, the associated work plans, the associated risks, etc.

Thus, ANECA is in the best position possible to handle – without affecting its operation – the adjustments to its procedures entailed by the new legislative regulations for the accreditation of university institutions and programmes in Spain (Royal Decree 640/2021, Royal Decree 822/2021), where the same external quality assurance procedures have been upheld, with emphasis on the greater responsibility of the universities' internal quality assurance systems.

The Agency has *tools* for **follow-up and review** to ensure internal quality assurance, which reflect the improvement actions detected during the external evaluation and self-assessment process, or which are detected internally, and the degree of implementation of the improvement actions proposed to attain them. These tools are periodically reviewed and, if necessary updated.

In addition, measurements of the indicators defined for each of the Agency's activities are performed annually, and they are periodically reviewed. The results of these measurements are detailed in the annual activity report.

There is an IT tool aimed at improving the computer applications that support the evaluation procedures. Through the email address *soporte@aneca.es*, users channel all incidents, which are recorded in a database for later analysis.

ANECA also has an IT tool that provides customer service (CS) to users, which channels, via the email *sau@aneca.es*, requests from the Agency's staff with regard to the facilities, materials, etc.

Finally, there are other mechanisms for follow-up and reflection within the Agency that collect stakeholders' contributions, such as:

- The meetings of the *Advisory Committees*.
- Meetings with the committee's chair of the ACADEMIA, CNEAI and PEP procedures.
- The Conversations with ANECA about Agency procedures, where attendants can contribute through online open meetings.
- The *ANECA environment*, a space created for dialogue with the universities through regular meetings with rectors and vice-rectors, where questions or suggestions about the Agency's actions can be directly addressed.

The follow-up by the Agency in its programme and institutional evaluation procedures is summarised in Table 4, which includes links to the evidence for each of the procedures. This clarifies the great importance the Agency places on reflecting on the follow-up of its activities. The participation of stakeholders, specifically academics, students and professionals, has been of great importance to carry out this type of reflection.

Table 4. **ANECA Internal Quality Assurance System.**

Procedures	PROGRAMME EVALUATION				INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION	
	VERIFICA	MONITOR	ACREDITA	INTERNATIONAL QUALITY LABELS (SIC)	NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIT	DOCENTIA
Evidence of procedures reviews	*Minutes of meetings* VERIFICA procedure (agreements). Documentation.	*Minutes of meetings* MONITOR procedure (agreements). Documentation.	*Minutes of meetings* ACREDITA procedure (agreements). *Minutes of meetings.* Documentation.	*Minutes of meetings* SIC procedure (agreements). *Minutes of meetings* Documentation SIC. Meta-evaluations.	*Minutes of meetings* of the AUDIT programme (agreements). Documentation AUDIT. Documentation INTERNATIONAL AUDIT.	*Minutes of meetings* DOCENTIA procedure (agreements). Documentation.

4.6.2. Improvements introduced

Table 5 summarises the improvements introduced and their actions.

For each of the improvements introduced, the actions being implemented are detailed, as well as future lines of action.

i) Proximity to stakeholders

> External communication

The Agency works to promote external communication – in a coordinated and strategic way – in order to increase its presence in society, both at national and international levels, thus having an impact on the promotion and assurance of quality, ANECA's main mission. This goal has a twofold objective:

- Promote a positive, close, transparent, professional and independent image of the Agency with its different audiences and interlocutors.
- Promote an external communication policy with social impact, both nationally and internationally, developing actions aimed at achieving visibility and impact of the Agency's activities (Conversations with ANECA, videos of procedures, conferences, etc.).

It is worth to mention the Agency's growing presence on social media (*Twitter, @ANECAinfo, LinkedIn and YouTube*, ANECATV), to intensify the visibility of ANECA's actions and to project its work academically and socially via smooth and updated communication. Two external newsletters have been launched:

- ANECA AL DÍA: every two weeks this newsletter details ANECA's main activities.
- ANECA NEWS: quarterly newsletter on the initiatives, activities and events with international impact promoted by ANECA or in which ANECA actively participates.

As for internal communication, a weekly newsletter has been created, *NUESTRA ANECA*, which aims to become an agile, engaging and efficient weekly appointment to give a global vision to all ANECA's people of the work being done, a summary of the most outstanding news, a reminder of some notices and a cohesion vehicle to optimise the feeling – of all Agency employees – of being part of a common project. In addition, monthly online meetings are held between management and all staff, an open space to create closeness and connection between all people at the Agency.

> Alignment of ANECA procedures

Based on the suggestions made by different stakeholders, ANECA is now aware of the large amount of bureaucracy that the evaluation processes usually implies for universities.

In this sense, Agency management a priority line of action consisting of modernising processes and streamlining procedures to make evaluation methodologies more suitable for their purposes (strengthening compliance with ESG 2.2). To this end, an analysis of the possible synergies between these procedures has been initiated.

> Electronic Office

The Agency has consolidated its 'zero paper' digitalisation strategy and proximity to stakeholders with the implementation of its Electronic Office. This long-term project started in 2020.

This is a space available to citizens 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so that people can access the Agency's information and services, as well as carry out any electronic procedure. It became operational with the complaints and suggestions procedure and the rest of the Agency's procedures will progressively be incorporated.

Table 5. **Improvements introduced.**

IMPROVEMENTS	ACTIONS/LINES OF ACTION
Proximity to stakeholders	> External communication > Alignment of ANECA procedures > Electronic Office > *ANECA_responde* > Creation of AULA-ANECA > Networking
Transparency	> Publication of reports > Institutional transparency
Social responsibility	> Equality > Social inclusion. > Ethics and academic integrity > Agenda 2030

> ANECA_responde

This channel facilitates greater involvement of the different stakeholders, is close to the general public and can be used by any person at any time.

This channel can answer any queries regarding our procedures, replacing the help email accounts listed in the contact section of our website. It has the following objectives:

- Greater proximity to citizens within the framework of digitalisation.
- Answer questions in a quicker and more streamlined way.
- Follow-up all questions asked by each user to improve their experience with the Agency. In this regard, and after users register, they can access their history of consultations submitted to the Agency, regardless of the procedure in question.
- Analyse the consultations received by those responsible for each procedure, in order to create/update the FAQ documents for the procedures.

This service has been implemented to address issues related to the National Committee for the Evaluation of Research Activities (CNEAI) and its activity with evaluating six-year periods. The rest of the Agency's procedures will be progressively incorporated.

> AULA ANECA

It was created in 2021, as a physical and virtual space dedicated to learning processes in the area of quality promotion and assurance. Through this space, services related to training will be provided to Agency personnel and expert collaborators and will be open to all stakeholders, such as other agencies, higher education institutions, bodies responsible for universities and research organisations, both nationally and internationally.

> Networking

The networking includes stakeholders interested in different ANECA actions. It favours the exchange of visions and impressions and brings the university closer to the social reality, with ANECA acting as a driving force for stakeholders in different fields to connect and work together.

ii) Transparency

> Publication of reports

In recent years, the Agency has been producing and publishing, through its website, a series of reports aimed at the different stakeholders in order to make external quality assurance procedures useful. Their implementation have an impact on both institutions and society (which affects ESG 2.3).

In turn, the Agency's evaluation units prepare the reports to contribute to the analysis of the outcomes and the criteria on which procedures are based, increasing their reliability (improving compliance with ESG 2.5) and reinforcing transparency in data publication. These reports communicate, both to stakeholders and to the general public, the quality assurance activities, policies and processes that ANECA implements to fulfil its purposes (reinforcing ESG 3.1).

The most relevant reports published by the Agency are:

- Report on the status of external quality assessment in Spanish universities. With an annual basis until 2020. It is drafted by ANECA with the participation of the quality agencies of the different regional governments and the main student representatives of Spanish universities.

  The purpose of this type of report is to offer a situational analysis of the impact of external quality assessment actions on programmes and institutions in the Spanish university system and their development, with an emphasis on reflecting on various important issues in order to promote improvements in the processes and results linked to such actions. The aim is to discuss different relevant issues in order to help in making decisions about the main actions to improve the Spanish university system in this area.
- ANECA Data Bank Reports: The Data Bank contains the Agency's periodic, stable and proven statistical information. This Bank is the result of the project '*Statistical information system of ANECA procedures and activities (SIEPAA)*'. One of its objectives is the preparation of annual performance reports on important numbers and indicators on the Agency's external evaluation activity and its evolution. Firstly, it provides the various stakeholders with public and systematic information on evaluation activities in order to contribute to their knowledge and reflection on the current situation. Secondly, it internally provides useful information for the detailed analysis, control and continuous improvement of each procedure. These reports first began to be produced in 2016, and have grown as evaluation activities at the Agency have increased.

  Currently, those reports make it possible to provide information for each university evaluated. Thus, if required, it is possible to provide reports for each of the universities and they can have their own data and a general reference with which to compare themselves.

- Open data: This section of the website offers the data resulting from ANECA's activity in a disaggregated and open way in order to facilitate any stakeholder interested in the data to work with them.
- Research evaluation: The purpose of these reports is to provide greater visibility and transparency in the definition of the assessment criteria for the Agency's procedures. They have initially focused on research evaluation.
- *Evaluation procedure review and improvement reports*: As a result of the institutional review process to improve the evaluation procedures, periodic meta-evaluation reports are established, which analyse each of the procedures and their processes in depth, with the participation of the main stakeholders involved, including the students themselves.

  Likewise, the result of the meta-evaluation process also contributes to meeting the objective of enhancing ANECA's accountability in the review and improvement of each procedure with its stakeholders.

  In this regard, the *Report on the satisfaction of different stakeholders with ANECA's activity* was prepared: *the improvement of evaluation procedures and other institutional actions to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities.* The report's recommendations helped for review of the procedures. These improvement actions have already been implemented in the academic staff's curricular evaluation procedures.

In addition to the aforesaid reports, ANECA regularly publishes thematic reports that undertaken an in-depth analysis of issues of particular importance and respond to the concerns of different stakeholders (focusing on the improvement of ESG 3.4):

- Thematic reports on improving the quality of institutions' actions in the service of university education objectives. Those are used as a kind of navigation chart so that universities can have clear guidance as to their specific course of action to achieve higher education objectives such as employability and job placement and inclusion.
- Development of tools and instruments for quality assessment processes in higher education. ANECA publishes a statement on short teaching and learning packages and recognition of their associated credentials.
- Publications and technical reports on Agency evaluation procedure to disseminate procedure outcomes. The Agency has identified the need for preparing such reports on a systematic basis. This will be done progressively for all procedures. Specifically, for AUDIT INTERNATIONAL, consideration is being given to how to include information on outcomes in the reports prepared by the Agency.
- Annual publications are presenting the facts and figures on the Agency's activities. Likewise, documents are prepared on areas of special interest, such as studies on equality.
- Improved access and visibility in the procedure evaluation reports. Centralised access to the reports on programme and institutional evaluation procedures.

As can be seen, the Agency's efforts since its inception, in terms of the preparation, participation and publication of reports and data, have been very noteworthy, both nationally and internationally. This reflects:

- The Agency's commitment to society in terms of the transparency of its activities.
- The Agency's permanent listening to citizens through the publication of reports at their request.
- The Agency's leadership within the Spanish and international university system.

Furthermore, the Agency's efforts have made possible to identify important challenges and to provide a suitable foundation for new initiatives.

> Institutional transparency

The Agency has created an area on the website that includes information on institutional planning, budget information, regulations governing institutional management, management reports, procurement information and information of public interest. Over time, this space will be enriched with the publication of more institutional information.

iii) Social responsibility

Among the master lines of ANECA's code of ethics, fairness appears as one of the Agency's fundamental values. In this regard, an Equity Unit was made up of the Equality, Social Inclusion and Academic Integrity Units, which specifically addresses the management of matters within its competence in a cross-cutting manner in all areas of the Agency.

> Equality

Following ANECA's code of ethics, criteria of equality have been introduced to ensure non-discrimination based on sex or gender in evaluations and accreditations, which contribute to placing equity as one of the Agency's fundamental values. Figure 2 shows the most significant actions taken by ANECA to ensure equality.

Internally, action focuses on: equal opportunities and non-discrimination, reconciliation and co-responsibility, and the participation of women in the political, economic and social spheres. Since 2018, ANECA has had an *action protocol against workplace harassment*. This protocol was updated in 2021, once the Equality Unit was created. Moreover, to ensure that the principles of effective equality are complied with and upheld, ANECA plans to design and implement an Equality Plan. To do so, a procedure and has been initiated, which has been communicated to the employees' representatives.

Externally, activities related to equality have been carried out linked to the academic staff evaluation procedures (outside the scope of this evaluation), reviewing and modifying some of the assessment criteria. By way of example, a resolution by Agency management is attached, which publicises the criteria and principles of equity and equal opportunities in the evaluations of university academic staff and RESEARCH personnel.

> Social inclusion

Affirmative action measures in the field of inclusion are one of the ANECA priorities including those related to specific circumstances for people with special needs, as well as others deemed appropriate.

In that area, the Agency has signed collaboration agreements with a wide range of entities (i.e.the Foundation of the National Organisation for Spanish Blind People (ONCE), which begun to work on a Label of University Excellence in Inclusion).

> Academic ethics and integrity

The new ANECA's code of ethics sets a benchmark framework for all the involved actors establishing the basic guidelines related to activities, good practices and its rules of conduct in the interest of the university community. With respect to the previous code of ethics, some improvements have been incorporated, such as the introduction of a series of values that ensure consideration of circumstances related to specific needs concerning diversity, such as inclusion and equality.

This initiative is framed within the impacts of academic integrity in higher education, which has been promoted by ANECA management.

Academic integrity implies that all persons involved in higher education must act with honesty, respect and responsibility in teaching, research and transfer, which provides confidence in the outcomes obtained in higher education institutions.

> 2030 Agenda

The Agency is committed to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in the United Nations 2030 Agenda and, consequently, carries out actions whose attainment contributes to their execution.

Below, a selection of the goals are set out to which the Agency can contribute in a special way to their achievement through the different activities it carries out:

- SDG 1. END OF POVERTY: The higher the quality of our university system, the higher the quality its graduates' education will be, and therefore, the better employment opportunities they will have, preventing for them to enter the circle of poverty.
- SDG 4. QUALITY EDUCATION: Over the last year, ANECA has been reviewing its evaluation procedures to ensure that goal. Attached are some of the Agency's participation at *inclusion forums*.

Figure 2. **ANECA's most significant actions to promote equality.**

Since 8 MARCH 2020, ANECA HAS TAKEN 8 SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY

1. Consolidation of a new management team made up mainly of women.
2. Renewal and update of all committees applying gender equality criteria. All six-year research term assessment committees are presided by women.
3. Publication of open statistical data broken down by gender.
4. Analysis, from a gender perspective, of the results of the pilot call for submissions for six-year terms to establish the criteria of the First call for submissions, scheduled for 2021.
5. Resolution with positive action measures to Foster equality and social inclusion in accreditation processes and in the validity of the six-year terms.
6. Proposal and roll-out of the First study on the salary gap in Spanish universities, along with the Ministry of Universities and CRUE.
7. Use of inclusive language in all of the Agency's communication. Inauguration of #Conversacions con ANECA with the equality units of the universities and research centres to create a space of mutual collaboration.
8. Creation of an Equality Unit and approval of the *Protocol for action against workplace harassment.*

Source: ANECA al día nº 20.

- SDG 5. GENDER EQUALITY: ANECA management's is evidenced in the related Agency activities, which are the object of analysis in this report (i.e.the creation of an Equity Unit, which in turn has specific units for equality, social inclusion and academic integrity).
- SDG 8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: The Agency offers the possibility of obtaining an International Quality Label (IQL, or SIC in Spanish), which assures employers that graduates whose degrees bearing a SIC label attain knowledge and practical competences with international standards.
- SDG 9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE: The actions of this goal are included in SDG 1 and SDG 8.
- SDG 10. REDUCE INEQUALITIES: The actions of this goal are included in SDG 5.
- SDG 16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS: See the improvement described above on transparency.
- SDG 17. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE GOALS: ANECA's has established alliances in different areas:
  - In the Agency's international strategy, to give continuity to the objectives that guide its daily actions in the Spanish framework and to contribute to the international visibility of the quality of Spanish higher. For this purpose, the ANECA Internationalisation Committee was created, from which alliances have been promoted with organisations such as the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE) to promote the participation of ANECA in Erasmus+ projects, and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) to promote ANECA's participation in supporting the quality of higher education in developing countries.
  - As part of the strategy to promote social inclusion, an alliance was established with the National Organisation for Blind People Foundation (ONCE) to progress in the training of people with disabilities.
  - In the coordination strategy with the Spanish regional's quality assurance agencies alliances have been promoted to achieve common action protocols. By way of example, ANECA's DOCENTIA procedure has been updated in accordance with them, and agreements have been signed for its application by mutual agreement.

Below is table 6 summarising and identifying the described improvement actions being carried out by ANECA under the guidelines of ESG 3.6 Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct.

Table 6. **List of ANECA's improvements to the ESG 3.6 guidelines.**

	Ensures that all persons involved in its activities are trained and act in an ethical and professional manner	Includes internal and external feedback mechanisms leading to continuous improvement within the Agency	Ensures no intolerant or discriminatory attitudes	Establishes appropriate communication with the competent authorities in the jurisdictions where it operates	Ensures that the activities or materials developed by subcontractors are in line with the ESG criteria	Allows the Agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it carries out external quality assurance
External communication		x				x
Programme alignment	x	x	x	x		x
Electronic office		x		x		x
ANECA_responde		x				x
Publication of reports		x		x		x
Institutional transparency				x	x	x
Equality and social inclusion	x		x		x	x
Ethics and academic integrity	x		x	x	x	x
Agenda 2030	x	x	x		x	x

5. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S EQA ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE FOCUS AREAS OF PART 2 OF THE ESG

Compliance with the criteria in Part 2 is described below. Criteria and guidelines for external quality assurance, in the initial phase of the INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION procedure, the only one ANECA is currently developing, and the AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedure.

5.1. ESG Standard 2.1. Consideration of internal quality assurance (all activities)

As established in this criterion, the tables 7 and 8 summarise how the Agency's different programme and institutional evaluation procedures take into consideration the criteria in ESG Part 1 (Criteria and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance). In addition, the more specific relationship between the different criteria/guidelines and the criteria defined in the ESG can be consulted in the documentation detailed for these procedures.

Table 7. **Compliance with the different ESG 1 criteria in each programme evaluation procedures.**

Criteria	PROGRAMME EVALUATION PROCEDURES						
	VERIFICA		MONITOR		ACREDITA		SIC: EUR-ACE® Eurobachelor EURO-INF Euromaster
	Bachelor's and Master's Degree	Doctorate	Bachelor's and Master's Degree	Doctorate	Bachelor's and Master's Degree	Doctorate	
ESG 1.1	Criterion 9	Criterion 8	Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criterion 3
ESG 1.2	Criteria 2, 5 and 8	Criteria 1, 4, 5 and 8	Criteria 2 and 5	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2
ESG 1.3	Criteria 5 and 8	Criteria 4, 5 and 8	Criteria 1 and 6	Criteria 1 and 6	Criteria 1 and 6	Criteria 1 and 6	Criteria 1 and 6
ESG 1.4	Criterion 4	Criterion 3	Guidelines 1.1 and 1.2	Guidelines 1.1 and 1.3	Guidelines 1.4 and 1.5	Guidelines 1.1 and 1.3	Criterion 1
ESG 1.5	Criterion 6	Criterion 6	Criterion 4	Criterion 4	Criterion 4	Criterion 4	Criterion 4
ESG 1.6	Criterion 7	Criterion 7	Criterion 5	Criterion 5	Criterion 5	Criterion 5	Criteria 5 and 9
ESG 1.7	Criteria 8 and 9	Criterion 8	Criteria 3 and 6	Criterion 3	Criteria 3 and 7	Criteria 3 and 7	Criteria 3 and 7
ESG 1.8	Criterion 4	Criterion 3	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2
ESG 1.9	Criteria 8 and 9	Criterion 8	Guideline 1.1 and Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criteria 1 and 3	Criterion 3	Criteria 1 and 3
ESG 1.10	(*1)	(*1)	(*3)	(*3)	(*4)	(*4)	(*4)
DOCUMENT	Support guide for the preparation of the ex-ante accreditation report of official university degrees	Support guide for the preparation of the vex-ante accreditation report of official doctoral degree	Support Guide for the follow-up process of official Bachelor's and Master's Degrees	Alignment of the criteria established by ANECA. MONITOR Doctorate	Framework Document	Alignment of the criteria established by ANECA. ACCREDIT Doctorate	Support guides

(*1) VERIFICA. The ex ante ACCREDITATION process is the first stage in a normative framework that requires official university degrees to submit cyclically to an external evaluation process. The legislation of reference in this case is Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(*2) VERIFICA procedure evaluates, through several criteria, aspects of the design of degrees relating to the definition of educational planning, the intended learning outcomes and the various rules for student progress and retention. In the ACREDITA procedure the outcomes of this design are eventually reviewed according to Criterion 1 and 6.

(*3) MONITOR. The follow-up process for an official degree implies that official university degrees should undergo a cyclical external evaluation process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(*4) ACREDITA. The accreditation renewal process implies that official university degrees must undergo a cyclical external assessment process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

Table 8. **Compliance with the different ESG 1 criteria in each institutional evaluation procedures.**

Criteria	INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES			
	DOCENTIA	INTERNATIONAL AUDIT	INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION (*1)	
			AUDIT	ACREDITA
ESG 1.1	Axis 1	Criterion 1	Criterion 1	Criterion 3
ESG 1.2	Axis 2	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criteria 1 and 6
ESG 1.3	Axis 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Criteria 1 and 6
ESG 1.4	Not applicable	Criterion 3	Criterion 3	Guidelines 1.4 and 1.5
ESG 1.5	Axes 1, 2, and 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 4	Criterion 4
ESG 1.6	Axis 2	Criterion 5	Criterion 5	Criterion 5
ESG 1.7	Axes 2 and 3	Criterion 9	Criterion 6	Criteria 3 and 7
ESG 1.8	Axes 1 and 3	Criterion 10	Criterion 7	Criterion 2
ESG 1.9	Axes 2 and 3	Criterion 2	Criterion 2	Criteria 1 and 3
ESG 1.10	Obtaining certification of the procedure implies renewal of certification every 5 years	The certification of the implementation implies the renewal of the certification every 5 years	Criterion 8	(*2)
DOCUMENT	Programme documentation	Support guide	Documentation of the design and certification AUDIT Guide to INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	

(*1) INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION is in its initial phase, the only one evaluated by ANECA thus far, pending the legal regulation of the institutional accreditation renewal phase.

(*2) ACREDITA: The accreditation renewal process implies that official university degrees must regularly undergo an external assessment process. Royal Decree 1393/2007 and subsequent updates.

The Agency has prepared a *report* in which it more extensively reviews compliance with ESG criterion 1 in each of the programme and institutional procedures, and explains how each of the criteria/requirements of each procedure complies with each of the aforesaid criteria.

Table 9 depicts the relationship between the ESG and the criteria applied in each procedure.

Table 9. **Relationship between ESG and procedure criteria.**

Criteria	INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION		INTERNATIONAL AUDIT
	AUDIT	ACREDITA	
ESG 1.1	Criterion 1. How the centre defines its objectives and quality policy	Criterion 3. Internal Quality Assurance System	Criterion 1 Quality Policy and Objectives
ESG 1.2	Criterion 2. How the centre provides Quality Assurance for its educational programmes	Criteria 1. Organisation and Development and 6 Learning Outcomes	Criterion 2 Design of the educational proposal
ESG 1.3	Criterion 3 How the centre orients its teaching towards students	Criterion 1. Organisation and Development and criterion 6 Learning Outcomes	Criterion 3 Teaching and other student-oriented actions
ESG 1.4	Criterion 3 How the centre orients its educational programmes to the students	Guideline 1.4 Criteria for admission, and 1.5 Academic regulations	Criterion 3 Teaching and other student-oriented actions

Table 9 (cont.). **Relationship between ESG and procedure criteria.**

Criteria	INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION		INTERNATIONAL AUDIT
	AUDIT	ACREDITA	
ESG 1.5	Criterion 4. How the university/centre guarantees and enhances the quality of its academic staff	Criterion 4. Academic staff	Criterion 4 Academic staff and teacher-support staff
ESG 1.6	Criterion 5. How the university/centre manages and improves its resources and services	Criterion 5. Supporting staff, material resources and services	Criterion 5 Management and enhancement of Material Resources and Services
ESG 1.7	Criterion 6. How the centre analyses and takes into account feedback from system processes	Criteria 3 Internal Quality Assurance System and 7 Satisfaction and Achievement Indicators	Criterion 9 Analysis and use of results
ESG 1.8	Criterion 7. How the university publishes information on degrees and other activities	Criterion 2. Information and Transparency	Criterion 10 Public information and transparency
ESG 1.9	Criterion 2. How the centre guarantees the quality of its educational programmes	Criterion 1. Organisation and Development and Criterion 3. Internal Quality Assurance System	Criterion 2 Design of the educational proposal
ESG 1.10	Criterion 8. How the centre ensures the maintenance and updating of the ISQAS	(*1)	Implementation certification requires the renewal of the certificate every 5 years
DOCUMENT	Guide to INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION		Support Guide

(*1) ACREDITA. The accreditation renewal process implies that official university degrees must regularly undergo an external assessment process. (Royal Decree 1393/2007 and subsequent updates http://www.aneca.es/eng/ANECA/Who-are-we/Regulations)

5.2. ESG 2.2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose (New Activities)

All of the Agency's procedures involve the participation of stakeholders, both for their design and implementation and for their review and improvement. The design takes legislation in force into account at all times, as well as the ESG established by ENQA and other stakeholders, and other European references. Finally, management shall provide its final approval. For evaluation activities that are regulated by law and are required to be applied throughout the national territory (mandatory procedures), there is a Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU) whose purpose is to coordinate the work of quality agencies in different territories.

The general procedure design and review process is shown in figure 3.

The process followed for the design of the Agency's new activities is described below:

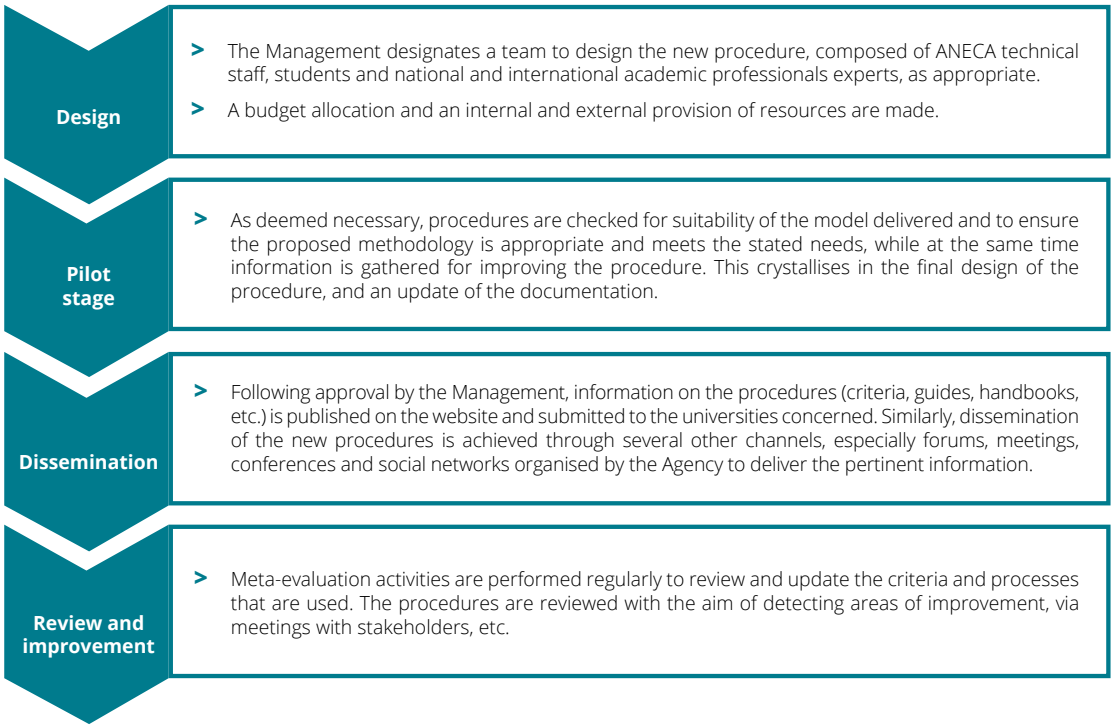
- With regard to the **INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION** of centres, according to Spanish laws and regulations, it consists of two phases:
  - Initial Institutional Accreditation.
  - Renewal of Institutional Accreditation (periodically every 6 years).

In both processes ANECA has established synergies between the degree accreditation procedure (ACREDITA procedure) and the procedures for IQAS implementation certification. (AUDIT and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL).

In the design of the Institutional Accreditation, the requirements established by the legal framework that governs the process have been taken into account:

- The accreditation of at least half of the degrees, half of the master's degrees and half

Figure 3. **Process for the design and revision of evaluation procedures.**



of the doctoral degrees delivered by the centre must have had their programme accreditation renewed (ANECA carries out this function through the ACREDITA procedure).

> That the centre is certified by its IQAS (ANECA carries out this function through the AUDIT and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures).

In addition to the elements contained in the relevant laws and regulations, ANECA has taken into account the "Agreements reached within the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU) for the evaluation of those degrees taught over several centres within the framework of the protocols of Institutional Accreditation of University Centres"

ANECA is currently immersed in the design of the institutional accreditation renewal process. In any case, the design of this renewal of accreditation will take into account both the renewal of the IQAS implementation certificate (which ANECA carries out through the AUDIT and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures), and those aspects that have been subject to special monitoring in the processes carried out by ANECA on the degrees through the VERIFICA-MONITOR and ACREDITA procedures.

> The **AUDIT INTERNATIONAL** Procedure was born in 2011, at the request of the National Assembly of Rectors of Peru (ANR), and a project was started in order to implement the AUDIT Procedure in Peru. For three years, and through the ANR, a reference adapted to the specific needs of the country has been designed, and AUDIT Peru was born. At the same time, contacts were established with different Peruvian universities interested in applying this Model. This situation continued until 2015, when the Peruvian government decided to close the ANR for political reasons unrelated to the programme. This caused ANECA to terminate their procedure in Peru.

At the same time, in Central America, the Central American Accreditation Council (CCA) was also interested in using the AUDIT Model in universities in the region. And once again, an agreement was established with ANECA for its development. The AUDIT Peru Model is used as a basis, with minor adaptations. However, various disagreements between the CCA and ANECA management caused the project to come to a standstill, until it was taken up again in 2018, when a pilot project was carried out to test the Model in nine universities.

At the same time, in 2017, the Colombian Ministry of Education requested tat a pilot

deployment of the test to be carried out in Colombia, and a project was carried out in collaboration with six universities. The text of the Model is virtually identical to the one used in Central America.

In the meantime, interest began to emerge from individual universities in different Latin American countries, so it was decided that it was not viable to implement a specific model for each country, but rather to rename the Model as AUDIT International, thus creating a single standard, based on the already mentioned previous experiences, which would be valid for all the universities on the continent that choose to use it.

5.3. ESG Standard 2.3. Implementing Processes (New Activities)

The degrees procedures and institutions developed at the Agency show all the information available on the ANECA website. Generally speaking, they all cover the following aspects:

- A self-assessment phase (self-evaluation or equivalent documents, sent by the institution).
- Review by the relevant evaluation committee. For those programmes that have an implementation phase, the evaluation is complemented by an on-site visit, which has been -replaced with an online visit since the declaration of the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemics- in which interviews are held with the stakeholders. Since the on-site visits have been replaced by the online visits, a new set of guidelines has been defined for carrying out this type of evaluation to guarantee their validity. By way of example, it includes the *protocol for online visits* of the IQL and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures.
- In the case of INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION, only the Initial Phase of the programme is in force, so it is limited to the verification of compliance with administrative requirements, based on the AUDIT and ACREDITA procedures.
- The commission produces a report providing guidance for institutional action, which is published on the relevant website.
- Systematic follow-up of the report recommendations.

All the information on the INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures is available on the website.

The table 10 describes the process carried out in each procedure to meet this criterion.

All the corresponding reports are available on the website on which the reports are published.

5.4. ESG Standard 2.4. Peer-review experts (New Activities)

The work carried out by external experts is essential for ANECA. The selection of experts is therefore a vitally important process to ensure the proper delivery of the Agency's service. The selection of experts is the Agency's responsibility and is carried out in a clear and transparent manner following the criteria previously established in each of the programmes.

A call for the selection of experts (national e international) is published in the web for the Agency's procedures whose objective is to reinforce ANECA's technical capacity by means of incorporating national

Table 10. **Implementation of the process. Initial Institutional Accreditation, and international AUDIT.**

	Self-evaluation or equivalent	External evaluation	Report	Systematic follow-up
Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	Input elements: AUDIT certificates and accreditation of 50% of the qualifications in force.	Verification of compliance with requirements based on AUDIT and ACREDITA.	Publication of report with recommendations. The university can appeal against the resolution of the report.	The recommendations will be followed up in phase II of the programme.
INTERNATIONAL AUDIT	Input elements: ISQAS documentation.	Evaluation of the design of the ISQAS, with the participation of students, and visit.	Publication of report with recommendations. The university can make allegations on the content of the report.	Not applicable.

or international experts with academic, professional, quality management, and/or students profiles, to participate in the processes of evaluation, certification and accreditation of degrees procedures or institutions.

There is a document "Call for experts of evaluation, certification and accreditation processes", which specifies the requirements for each profile in each procedure, including incompatibilities and other similar aspects.

All experts participating in the procedures (including AUDIT INTERNATIONAL, AUDIT and ACREDITA), before starting their engagement with the Agency, undertake to abide by a ethical. This code is inspired by ANECA's Mission, Vision and Values, and sets a framework of reference for all Agency members, staff and collaborators, establishing the basic guidelines for the exercise of its activities, good practices and rules of conduct (including incompatibilities) in the interest of the university community. In addition, they will have to undergo a training process before undertaking any assessment for the Agency. As an example, attached is a *training of the AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedure*.

In particular, the selection of experts for the following procedures is carried out:

- In the INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION, it is not required to proceed to select experts, as the procedure is reduced to the verification of the fulfilment of requirements. This verification is carried out through the Advisory Committee for INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION (director of the Agency and persons responsible for the procedures involved), who will check that the applying university centre meets the requirements established for Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: having passed the evaluation that certifies the implementation of its quality assurance system (AUDIT procedure) and having passed the evaluation of 50% of accreditation renewals for degrees offered at that centre (ACREDITA procedure).
- For AUDIT INTERNATIONAL the selection of experts is carried out through the call for experts published by the Agency on its website. Evaluation panels include a student to provide input, whenever possible. Although the call for experts is permanently open, it is sometimes difficult to find eligible students willing to participate in these processes, and the Agency is reflecting on how to encourage student participation.

In any case, before starting an evaluation process, ANECA provides the applicant institution with the list of people who are on the evaluation panel and offers the possibility for the institution to reject all or part of the panel with due justification. In this case, ANECA studies the reasons given by the institution and proceeds, if necessary, to modify the composition of the panel of experts that will carry out the evaluation.

5.5. ESG Standard 2.5. Criteria for outcomes (New Activities)

ANECA ensures that all information is accessible and transparent to all stakeholders and, to this end, publishes the documentation on the procedures:

- INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION procedure: includes information on: scope of action, regulations, documents and tools (guidelines and assessment criteria), advisory committee for institutional accreditations, and the assessment reports and accredited centres.
- AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedure: includes information on: scope of action, participation requirements, registers of certified universities/ centres: evaluation reports, evaluation and certification commissions, and evaluation model (guidelines and evaluation criteria).

To ensure the consistency of evaluations in:

- The Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION the Advisory Committee for INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION meets periodically to standardise the assessment criteria. These changes are reflected in the *minutes*.
- AUDIT INTERNATIONAL, in order to coordinate and unify all evaluation processes, the Assessment Committee ensures the homogeneous interpretation of all criteria in all evaluations conducted. These changes are reflected in the *minutes*.

For each of the procedures there is an email account to resolve any questions that may arise among the users of each procedure, including higher education institutions and experts. These accounts are managed by those responsible for each procedure. Over time they will be replaced by the *ANECA_responde* channel.

5.6. ESG Standard 2.6. Reporting (all activities and New Activities)

a) Analysis of the Standard

Table 11 shows the actions taken by the Agency to comply with this standard.

The Agency received two main recommendations. On the one hand, the panel recommended that the Agency include all relevant information included in the site visit reports in the final accreditation reports. On the other hand, EQAR estimated that ANECA's practice of publishing summary reports does not meet the requirement of the standard, which requires full reports to be published

ANECA has made an effort to define and produce more complete and extensive reports that convey the information in greater detail that was suggested by the ENQA review panel in the external evaluation visit. Likewise, new internal *documents* have been prepared for the accreditation evaluation committees, to provide guidance in the drafting of the reports and to ensure that the explanation justifying the assessments can be understood by all stakeholders.

To this end, the different stakeholders (students, experts, teachers, universities, etc.) were consulted on the form and content of the accreditation reports. The responses showed different preferences in all cases. On the one hand, the students expressed their wishes that the reports should not be too long. On the other hand, the universities requested that the reports be motivated and clear, referring to concrete evidence that would facilitate the possibility of making pleas.

The rest of the stakeholders suggested that reports be prepared with administrative language and guidance to facilitate decision making.

In response to ENQA's requirements and the suggestions expressed by stakeholders, the Accreditation Committee *agreed* to prepare full reports, so as to reconcile ESG requirements with the needs of the groups to which they are addressed. Therefore, the Accreditation Committee's challenge has been to produce reports that, on the one hand, refer to concrete evidence so that the university can understand the reason for the different evaluations (especially negative ones) and, on the other, are written in a style that is easily understandable by all stakeholders, taking into account students' requests for their simplicity and brevity.

The external expert panels in charge of preparing the reports have received pertinent training and guidelines for the drafting of the new reports.

As for the AUDIT procedure, EQAR's recommendation to publish complete reports has been implemented. At present, full certification and site visit reports can be viewed on the website, both at national and international levels.

Following the proposed improvement to the publication of reports under the AUDIT and ACREDITA procedures, the Agency now makes all full reports of its evaluation procedures publicly available.

Table 11. **Partial and substantial compliance. ESG Standard 2.6.**

CRITERIA	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	STATUS
ESG.2.6. Reporting (ENQA and EQAR)	**ENQA:** The panel recommends that the Agency include in the final accreditation reports relevant information included in the visit reports. **EQAR:** While the Register Committee understands the usefulness of providing summary reports, the Committee saw no reasons why ANECA would not be able to also publish the full results for all its external quality assurance procedures. The Register Committee concluded that ANECA's practice of publishing summary reports does not meet the requirement of the standard, and therefore could not follow the panel's conclusion of compliance. As the Register Committee could verify the publication of a number of full reports (in the case of the AUDIT procedure), the Register Committee was able to conclude that the agency complies at least partially with ESG 2.6.	ANECA has made an effort to define and produce more complete and extensive reports that transmit in a more detailed way the information suggested in the external evaluation. The Accreditation Commissions produce and publish *comprehensive reports* that refer to concrete evidence, so that the university can understand the reason for the different assessments (especially negative ones). The reports are also written in a style that is easy to understand for all stakeholders. The Accreditation Commissions responsible for preparing the reports have received the relevant training and training and guidelines for the drafting of the new reports. As for the AUDIT procedure, EQAR's recommendation to publish complete reports has been implemented. At present, full certification and site visit reports can be viewed on the website, both at national and international levels.	Corrected

b) Analysis of the Standard for New Activities

The structure of all the Agency's evaluation reports, including INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION and INTERNATIONAL AUDIT, as well as the systematic process for their elaboration, is defined and argued in the documentation of the procedures developed in the Agency, and already incorporates the improvements introduced by ANECA, from the last external evaluation of ENQA and the decisions of the ENQA Board and the EQAR Registry Committee (2017) regarding the preparation of complete reports. The Agency publishes full reports on all procedures on its website.

Moreover, the reports are prepared in accordance with European standards defined to improve their quality (EQArep). In addition, to facilitate the drafting of the reports, specific help guides, frequently asked question documents, etc. are published on the website for each procedure. As an example, attached is the link to the website of the INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION procedure. As part of this process, in all the procedures there is the possibility for those evaluated to point out possible interpretation errors before the report is concluded.

With respect to each of the procedures, the reports contain:

- INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: verification of the requirements of the Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: validity of the certificate of implementation of the ISQA, status in the Registry of Universities, Schools and Degrees (RUCT) for the undergraduate and master's degrees and motivation: The evaluation of the criteria and observations is detailed, highlighting the points that will be evaluated in the institutional accreditation renewal process.
- AUDIT INTERNATIONAL: overall assessment, justification, opportunities for improvement and strengths.

In addition, in accordance with the improvements introduced in ESG 2.6, before sending the reports to the stakeholders, ANECA has established several control mechanisms to guarantee the quality and completeness of the reports submitted. For example, ANECA's technical staff reads the report twice:

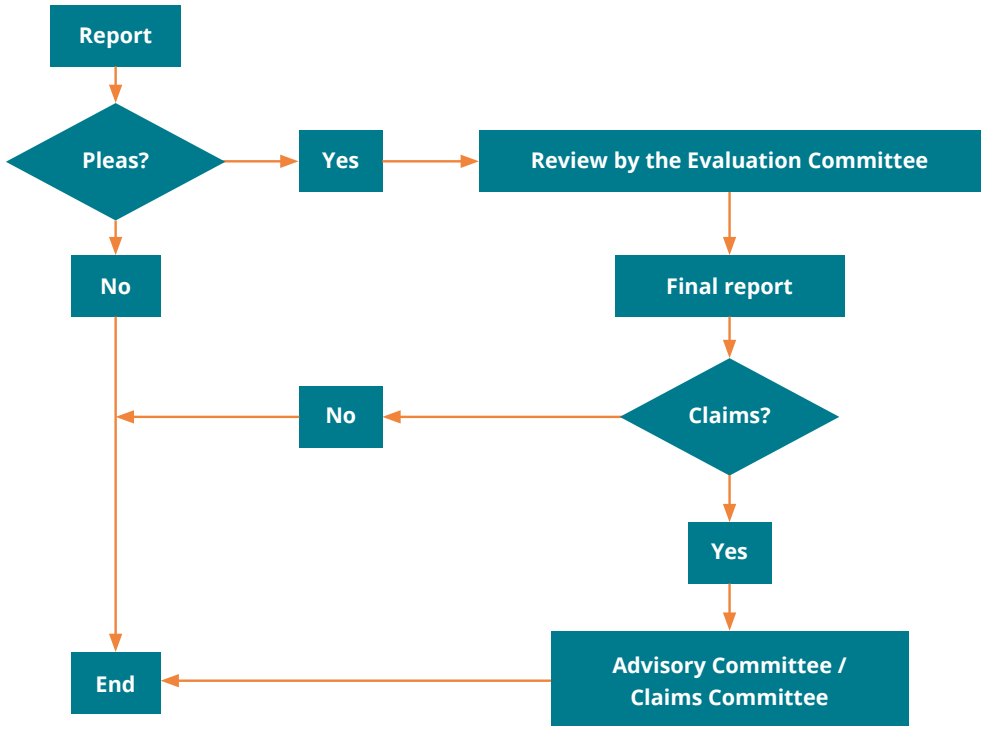
- Individual reading to verify that both the wording and the content of the report reflect the accuracy of the data and that its reading by third parties does not give rise to misinterpretations.
- Cross-reading of all reports from the same institution to check the homogeneity of common information.

5.7. ESG Standard 2.7. Complaints and appeals (New activities)

5.7.1 General procedure for pleas, claims and appeals for the different procedures

In general, the procedure for pleas, claims and appeals for the different procedures follows the scheme shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. **General process for pleas, claims and appeals.**



Given that the Agency is an autonomous body, it proceed to set up the Advisory Committees for the Evaluation of Programmes, Institutions and Academic Staff**.** Both are technical committees, which are active in each of their respective areas. Both are defined in Article 18 of the Articles of Association.

Their functions include, for those procedures whose regulatory standards do not consider Claims Committees, to issue the reports on the appeals and claims filed against the actions of ANECA management, in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Specifically, for the INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL procedures, the appeals/ claims that may be received will be evaluated by the Advisory Committee for the Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions.

5.7.2. Specific procedures for pleas, claims and appeals on INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION and AUDIT INTERNATIONAL

For each of the procedures covered by this evaluation, an example of the history of a file from the time it is submitted to the time it is certified is given below:

- Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION procedure: The university applies for institutional accreditation by completing the *form* on the Agency's website and then submitting it to the Agency through the general electronic registry of the General State Administration. ANECA, through its Advisory Committee for INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION, verifies that the application complies with the requirements established for the Initial INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION and sends a binding evaluation report to the Council of Universities in favourable or unfavourable terms. This report may be accompanied by remarks prepared by ANECA. The Agency notifies the university that the report has been sent to the Council of Universities. The resolution may be positive or negative. The university may file an appeal against this resolution. The ANECA Advisory Committee for the Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions analyses the issues admitted for processing and submits the corresponding report within a maximum period of one month.
- *AUDIT INTERNATIONAL* procedure: The Agency sends the '*AUDIT procedure design evaluation report*' to the applicant university. Each school has five business days to submit possible remarks on the results of the evaluation. The remarks are reviewed by the Assessment Committee which, if appropriate, includes them in the report. Likewise, in the certification phase for ISQA implementation, the '*AUDIT Procedure Audit Report*' is prepared. If the university does not agree with the contents of the report, it has five days to submit a '*Pleading*'. After the analysis of this document by the audit team, ANECA sends a new version of the aforesaid report to the university representative. In the case of discrepancy, the university may submit an appeal to the Agency, which is reviewed by the Advisory Committee for the Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions.

In neither programme have any complaints been received from the institutions since the last review.

The Agency's General Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Procedure is specified in Appendix 3.

PART III / **SWOT ANALYSIS**

After a process of joint reflection by the staff, the people who collaborate in the different procedures and ANECA management, an updated analysis of the Agency's Strengths - Weaknesses - Opportunities - Threats (SWOT) was prepared, whose main characteristic – besides revealing how hard the organisation works at continuous improvement – is to show whether Agency weaknesses or threats from previous analyses have now turned into strengths or opportunities. In addition, new opportunities for improvement have been identified.

Table 12 summarises the Agency's SWOT:

Table 12. **SWOT summary of the Agency.**

	Internal origin	External origin
Strengths	**STRENGTHS** > Staff qualifications. > Creation of an appropriate working environment. > Working conditions that favour work-life balance. > Ability to adapt to change. > Digital transformation. > Promotion of a communication policy of social projection. > International growth of ANECA. > Creation of the Agency's own international quality seals. > Transparency and public service vocation.	**OPPORTUNITIES** > Addressing new aspects of the reality of higher education. > Expansion of quality assurance and recognition initiatives. > Proximity to stakeholders and the general public. > Expansion of the channels of collaboration with the quality agencies of the Spanish Autonomous Communities. > Capacity of the Agency to work internationally, acting as an accrediting agency in other countries.
Weaknesses	**WEAKNESSES** > Limitation of the mechanisms necessary for growth. > Need for tools that concentrate the Agency's information. > Limitation of procedures to ease their bureaucratic burden. > Low participation of international experts.	**THREATS** > Changing legislation affecting the university system. > Health situation caused by COVID-19. > Budgetary constraints. > Digital, demographic, socio-cultural and labour market developments that make it difficult to adapt.

This current ANECA SWOT is detailed below.

A. **STRENGTHS**

> Staff qualification: introduction of new training procedures and cross-cutting staff training, such as the Business Object course, tools and applications for managing the procedures, languages, etc.

> Creation of an appropriate working environment and working conditions that favour work-life balance: implementation of work-life balance measures such as teleworking and the extension of flexible working hours.

> Ability to adapt to change: this has been demonstrated at critical moments such as the emergence of COVID with the implementation of teleworking in record time.

> Digital transformation: modification of the application procedure and submission of documentation for the different degrees in digital format. Creation of the Electronic Office.

> Promotion of a communication policy with social impact nationally and internationally: creation of

national and international external newsletters, as well as monthly newsletters and management meetings with staff internally. Increase and consolidation of ANECA's presence on social networks (ANECA TV, LinkedIn, etc.).

- Strengthening ANECA's internationalisation to contribute to the excellence and international impact of the Spanish university system: creation of an Internationalisation Committee to coordinate the different initiatives in this area and increase collaboration and cooperation agreements with different entities.
- Innovation in the creation of new processes that help improve the quality and recognition of higher education: creation of the Agency's own international quality labels.
- Transparency and public service vocation; publication of data; generating spaces for dialogue with stakeholders (*AULA-ANECA, ANECA space*, videos, *conversations with ANECA*, etc.).

B. WEAKNESSES

- Limitation of the mechanisms necessary for growth: in order to handle the new challenges demanded by the higher education system (national and international), there is a need to provide the Agency with the mechanisms to ensure that it can increase its scope of action, as well as increasing its staff.
- Need for tools that centralise the Agency's information: the staff and experts who make up the evaluation bodies or who collaborate in the Agency's procedures require technological applications that contribute to better coordination of ANECA's multiple activities.
- Limitation of procedures to lighten their bureaucracy: university legislation, the Agency's legal personality and the application of administrative procedures all restrict the simplification of processes.
- Scarce participation of international experts in the Agency's evaluation bodies: weakness linked to the limitation of the necessary growth mechanisms, due to the need to increase ANECA's internationalisation.

C. THREATS

- Changing legislation affecting the university system: regulatory development of new royal decrees regulating university institutions and programmes, bill for a new organic law on the Spanish university system.
- Health situation caused by COVID-19: consequences caused by the pandemic.
- Budgetary restrictions: financial limitations on personnel expenses to increase and improve ANECA's staff.
- Digital, demographic, socio-cultural and labour market changes that make it difficult to adapt to them.

D. OPPORTUNITIES

- Addressing several innovative features of the reality of higher education: the dynamic and complex environment of lifelong learning requires new challenges, such as short learning experiences certified with micro-credentials, with innovative teaching and learning models and new formulas to recognise their associated credentials.
- Expansion of quality assurance and recognition initiatives: the increase in society of the culture of quality increases the demand for quality assurance formulas, and the Agency is designing new instruments for comprehensive quality recognition based on new stakeholder demands and changes in the teaching and learning environment, such as international labels of quality in blended education, inclusion, employability, etc.
- Proximity to stakeholders and the general public. The legislative context in the public sector:
  - On the one hand, it demands proximity and closeness to citizens through transparency in its procedures, among other actions. Therefore, the Agency implements direct communication tools with stakeholders, such as *Conversations with ANECA*, and publishes on its website (ANECA for Transparency) economic, budgetary and other information available to citizens.
  - On the other, it promotes the streamlining of formalities and simplification of administrative procedures, for example with the implementation of the Electronic Office. In this way, relations are enhanced between the Agency and citizens.
- Expansion of collaboration channels with the quality agencies of the Spanish regional governments to promote cooperation and share experiences and knowledge, as well as to design strategies on issues of common interest and to find shared solutions.
- The Agency's capacity to work internationally, acting as an accrediting agency in other countries, particularly in regions where demand has been detected, such as Latin America, North Africa, Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

PART IV / **CONCLUSIONS**

The self-assessment reflected in this report, including the SWOT analysis, is the result of ANECA's internal reflection within the framework of updating the Agency's strategic planning for upcoming years.

Thus, the conclusions of this report point to the challenges that the Agency and the development areas linked to ESG 3.6 must handle in the short and medium terms. These challenges will make it possible to improve all of the Agency's procedures in a cross-cutting manner in upcoming years, with a vision that goes beyond mere ESG compliance and aspires to excellence. All this to turn ANECA into a benchmark for the Spanish university system and an example of good practices among European quality assurance agencies. These challenges are summarised in Table 13 below:

Table 13. **Future challenges for the Agency.**

CHALLENGE	AREA OF DEVELOPMENT
Strengthen ANECA's central role in Spain's higher education, research and science system.	Strengthening ANECA's mission as the national agency of the Spanish university system in the updating of university legislation.
Consolidate ANECA's digital autonomy for greater proximity to stakeholders through electronic means.	Roll out the e-Office in all Agency programmes as a means of interaction with stakeholders.
Reduce bureaucracy in evaluation procedures.	Initiate a preferential line of action consisting of modernising processes and streamlining procedures, focusing on the alignment of the Agency's evaluation procedures.
Accompanying the universities through meeting forums, publications, etc. where they can inform about ANECA procedures.	Create spaces and promote the use of tools that facilitate information and dialogue with stakeholders.
Respond to social and labour market demands by introducing equity and inclusion criteria in assessments and accreditations.	In order to achieve equal opportunities for all people, and to ensure that the special needs of groups with difficulties for their full integration into society are taken into account, ANECA promotes: > The inclusion of equity and inclusion criteria in evaluation programmes. > The Agency's equity and equality units. > ANECA's own international quality seal of inclusion.
Increasing the Agency's transparency with citizens.	Increase the information and data on the Agency's activities, actions and decisions made available to citizens.
Promoting the vocation of public service.	> Strengthen the academic integrity unit to consolidate this commitment. > Promote efficiency in public management. > Promote the use of tools that allow a closer approach to citizens with a management based on rigour in actions and proximity.

Table 13 (cont.). **Future challenges for the Agency.**

CHALLENGE	AREA OF DEVELOPMENT
Boost ANECA's international growth in order to contribute to the excellence and international impact of the Spanish university system.	To consolidate ANECA's position at international level as an instrument that favours the international growth of higher education institutions. To this end, an international growth plan is defined.
Promote a communication policy of social projection at national and international level.	Consolidate the strategy of accurate, timely and rigorous communication that facilitates access to data. Promote the use of social networks: ANECATV channel, LinkedIn, etc.
Consolidate tele-working in the Agency.	Implement the necessary procedures for its consolidation with all its guarantees.
Innovate in the creation of new processes that help to improve quality and recognition in higher education.	Creation and launch of a Comprehensive Quality Recognition combining the Agency's quality seals: implementation of the seal for distance and hybrid learning, the seal for medicine, the seal for inclusion, the employability seal, etc. Design of instruments for the recognition of the excellence of the activities carried out by the PDI.
Define and implement an information and business intelligence system .	Creation of an automated indicator management system that allows for the automatic production of the necessary reports from the different units in order to achieve higher levels of quality in the Agency's processes, and thus achieve greater citizen satisfaction in the provision of services.
To implement the services of AULA ANECA.	Creation of a physical and virtual space dedicated to learning processes in the field of quality promotion and assurance. It is aimed at Agency staff, expert collaborators and is open to all stakeholders at national and international level.
Consolidate a transversal management system for the Agency's evaluators.	Consolidate the database of the people who evaluate in order to concentrate the relevant information for their optimal management.
To increase the Agency's own revenue through new projects.	Extension of voluntary evaluation services in which the institutions concerned are required to pay compensate ANECA financially for the services provided.

The development of these working areas and the achievement of the challenges posed will require short-, medium- and long-term planning that takes into account the Agency's current resources, the current strategic context, upcoming regulatory changes and the incorporation of new human and economic resources.

Aware that in some cases the political and economic situation may condition progress, for issues that depend on the Agency we rely on the professionalism and commitment of everyone at ANECA, always seeking to improve quality assurance in the higher education area.

APPENDIX I / **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS**

ACADEMIA: Faculty Evaluation Procedure.
ACREDITA: Evaluation procedure for the renewal of the initial accreditation of official degrees.
INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: Procedure that evaluates applications for institutional accreditation of university centres.
AECID: Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.
ANECA: National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation.
AUDIT: Procedure that guides university centres in the design of internal quality assurance systems.
INTERNATIONAL AUDIT: Procedure that guides foreign university centres in the design of internal quality assurance systems.
CCII: General Council of Computer Engineering.
CGCOM: General Council of Official Medical Associations.
CNDFME: National Conference of Deans of Spanish Faculties of Medicine.
CNEAI: Spanish National Commission for Research Evaluation.
CONCITI: General Council of Official Schools of Technical Computer Engineering.
SWOT: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
DOCENTIA: A procedure that helps universities to create evaluation systems for their academic staff.
ENAE: European Network for the Accreditation of Engineering Education.
ENPHI®: New Distance Learning International Quality Label.
ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
EQANIE: European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education.
EQAR: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.
EQArep: Transparency of European Higher Education through Public Quality Assurance Reports.
ESG: Criteria and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
EUR-ACE®: It is a certificate awarded by an agency authorized to a university for a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in n an Engineering programme.
EURO-INF: It is a certificate awarded by an agency authorized to a university for a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Computer Studies.
FAQ: Frequently asked questions.
ONCE Foundation: Spanish National Organisation for Blind People Foundation.
IIE: Spanish Engineering Institute.
LOPD: Spanish Organic Law on Personal Data Protection.
MONITOR: Follow-up procedure of the official degree to verify its correct implementation and outcomes.
SDG: Sustainable Development Goals.
PEP: Non-civil servant academic staff evaluation procedure.
REACU: Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies.
RIC: Integral Quality Recognitions.
RUCT: Register of Universities, Institutions and Degrees.
ISQA: Internal Quality Assurance Systems.
CS: Customer Service.
SEPIE: Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education.
SIC: International Quality Labels.
SIEPAA: Statistical information system of ANECA programmes and activities.
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
VERIFICA: Evaluation procedure of the study plans designed in accordance with the EHEA.
WFME: World Federation for Medical Education.

APPENDIX II / **HOW RECOMMENDATIONS ARE HANDLED**

ANECA has also worked to define and implement actions for those criteria that, despite being substantially or fully compliant, ENQA and/or EQAR made some type of suggestion or recommendation. Table 14 shows these actions.

Table 14. **Recommendations.**

CRITERIA	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	STATUS
ESG 2.4. Peer-review experts (EQAR)	The panel would encourage the agency to continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels.	The call for call for evaluators, launched in 2017, incorporating a new section for international evaluators with the aim of increasing the number of international profiles in its evaluation committees who, fulfilling the established requirements, wish to form part of the evaluation commissions of our programme evaluation procedures (VERIFICA, ACREDITA and International Quality Seals (SIC)) and for the AUDIT institutional evaluation procedure (national and international). To boost the international profile of this call, a parallel English version is published on the ANECA website. The selection of evaluators is the Agency's responsibility and is carried out in a clear and transparent manner following the criteria established *a priori* in each of the programmes. All that being said, ANECA still has room for further growth in the participation of international experts.	Corrected
ESG 2.7. Complaints and appeals (EQAR)	It is recommended to define a complaints procedure for the MONITOR programme.	The MONITOR Procedure is exclusively improvement-oriented and has no administrative consequences. Thus, the reports do not conclude with a favourable or unfavourable decision. The procedure also has a phase for the correction of material errors; material errors are understood to be formal mistakes in names, dates, arithmetic operations, transcriptions of documents, etc. that appear in the follow-up report and that are detected when exclusively considering the data provided during the follow-up process. It should also be borne in mind that the MONITOR report forms part of the evidence requested during the renewal of accreditation and clarifications can be made in the self-evaluation report on the status of the university's degrees within the framework of ACREDITA.	Corrected

Table 14 (cont). **Recommendations.**

CRITERIA	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	STATUS
ESG 3.4. Thematic analysis (ENQA)	The panel recommends that the number and range of thematic reports be expanded.	See point 3.6 of improvements in this report, proximity to stakeholders on thematic reports.	Corrected
ESG 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct. (ENQA)	The panel recommends that annual information on the review of the system be published.	See page 3.6. of this report: internal quality assurance.	Corrected

Self-reflection of all the Agency's divisions and units has continued, which has given rise to the improvement actions implemented by ANECA in response to internally detected needs. As a result, the results obtained have led to an improvement in the Agency's processes and activities. However, it is still necessary to lighten bureaucracy during the evaluation procedures, where the margin for improvement is limited due to the requirements of the administrative procedure applied in the Agency's processes.

On the other hand, ESG compliance has been strengthened in existing evaluation procedures and compliance has been ensured in new evaluation procedures.

APPENDIX III / **GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLIMENTS TO THE AGENCY**

In 2016, a Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Unit was created within ANECA's Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit, in order to centralise all complaints, suggestions and compliments that are sent to the Agency.

All complaints must be answered within 20 days. The Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit is in charge of follow-up for this process. Periodically, a *document* is prepared, which includes, among other things, data on complaints, possible causes and responses to them, which is then sent to management. These periodic documents will serve as a basis to try to define improvement actions and try to adapt the Agency's processes to citizens' needs.

Since 2017, at year end the Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit has prepared information, which is published on the website. The information collected is included in the annual report. Specifically, objective C4 describes the information related to complaints, suggestions and congratulations for each year in question, including a summary of the number of complaints, suggestions and congratulations received in each of the procedures and also explains the different reasons for each of them. For example, one of the alleged reasons for complaints is the excessive time taken to process procedures. Likewise, most of the compliments indicate the professionalism of the Agency's personnel in resolving the incidents that occurred during processing.

ANECA has a website section for citizens that details the means by which complaints, suggestions and compliments can be submitted.

Since 2018, changes have been made to adapt the procedure to new data protection legislation. In addition, in 2021, the new ANECA Electronic Office was started up. The aim of this service is to ensure direct connection between citizens and ANECA, which improves and facilitates their participation.

There is also a project for channelling all requests for information by Agency users. Through the ANECA_responde tool, all the information received from users will be answered and processed in order to incorporate improvements to the procedures, improve their accessibility, create a FAQ section, etc. All this arises from the large volume of extremely similar requests for information. On the date this report was finished, this channel has been enabled for CNEAI. The rest of the Agency's procedures will be incorporated progressively.

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