



AGENCIA NACIONAL DE EVALUACIÓN
DE LA CALIDAD Y ACREDITACIÓN

VERIFICA PROGRAMME

REVIEW PANELS FOR THE

VERIFICATION OF RECOGNISED

UNIVERSITY DEGREES

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INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the function, structure and proceedings of the review panels involved in the verification of recognised university degrees, together with the criteria and the process used to select the reviewers that make up the review panels.

In accordance with the provisions of article 25 of Royal Decree 1393/2007, the review panels shall consist of experts from the academic and, where appropriate, professional fields of the corresponding degree. These experts shall be renowned independent reviewers designated by ANECA.

The selection of experts is also based on the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* set by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Consortium for Accreditation's *Principles for the Selection of Experts*.

Account has also been taken of the Agency's previous experience in designating evaluation panels for the review of designs for recognised postgraduate degrees, teaching assessment for recruitment purposes and teaching staff accreditation for entry to public service (civil servant status).

The principles on which this proposed review panels are based are as follows:

- a) In relation to the selection process used:
 - The possibility of potential reviewers who fulfil the requirements of the call made by ANECA being able to participate, with respect for the voluntary nature of their participation, as stated in the call.
- b) In relation to the structure and proceedings of the panels:

- Representation of all the branches and different fields of knowledge.
 - Systematic application of the criteria in the selection of the members of the different panels.
 - Consistency in the assessments made by the review panels dealing with the different branches of knowledge, with mechanisms such as the two stage evaluation and resolution of the designs.
 - The independence of the reviewers, and the identification and resolving of conflicts of interest whenever they may occur.
 - Application of the ANECA Code of Ethics, ensuring, amongst other aspects, the confidentiality of the documentation provided by the universities and the results of the evaluation.
 - Possibility of the universities submitting remarks about the panel members.
- c) In relation to the profile of the panel members:
- Renowned experts, with an academic or professional career appropriate to the functions to be carried out, i.e. with relevance in terms of teaching and research and/or verified experience in evaluation.
 - Inclusion of the necessary profiles to ensure that the evaluation covers different dimensions (academic, students, professional, and international).
 - Availability to participate and take on the activities that the panels need to carry out in a responsible way.
 - Diversity of academic and professional background.

The document is structured as follows: section 1 gives an explanation of the function, structure and proceedings of the panels; section 2 deals with the

profiles, sources and general criteria for reviewer selection; section 3 explains the process of how the members of the panels are selected.

1. FUNCTION, STRUCTURE AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE REVIEW PANELS

A series of panels have been set up that are involved in the different stages of the review process.

The process consists of two stages:

1. **Evaluation:** Evaluation of the degree designs and issuance of an *preliminary review report* that is referred to the universities.
2. **Pleas** (supporting arguments): Any pleas put forward by the university are reviewed and, where appropriate, an *review report* is issued and sent to the Universities Council.

There are two types of body that carry out these evaluation activities in the two stages: review panels that deal with a specific branch of knowledge (or *branch review panels*) and a *Report Issuing Committee*. Both are involved in the issuing of the preliminary review report and the definitive report. The fact that both the panels and the Committee are involved permits a higher degree of conformity with the legal framework, as well as consistency in the evaluations.

In a subsequent third stage, once the definitive review reports have been issued, the universities have the possibility of putting forward pleas (supporting arguments). In this stage, a third panel, *the ANECA Resources Committee*, is involved, which reviews all pleas put forward as a result of ANECA review processes. It is not exclusive to the VERIFICA programme.

The function and structure of the branch review panels and the Report Issuing Committee are dealt with below. This is followed by a summary of the process, which specifies the work of the panels. A brief explanation is then given of the functioning of the ANECA Resources Committee, together with the mechanisms for the coordination and monitoring of the programme.

1.1. Review panels that deal with a specific branch of knowledge

The function of the branch review panels is to carry out the academic evaluation of the degree design, as well as to review any pleas put forward by universities once they have been notified of the preliminary review reports.

At least one **review panel** is set up for each level (Bachelor and Master's) and for each of the five branches of knowledge (arts and humanities, sciences, social sciences, engineering and architecture, and health sciences).

Each panel is made up of:

- A *chairperson* who has the functions of coordinating the proceedings of the panel, as well as issuing the panel's reports on the design of each degree submitted.
- The *members*, the number of which is determined according to the academic fields, the number of different degrees to be evaluated and the number of applications submitted. The members study and analyse the degree designs assigned to them and act as spokespersons before the rest of the panel. They also review any pleas put forward by the universities.

There must be at least one panel member with international experience in programme evaluation. Where appropriate, experts will be included from the professional fields being evaluated by the panel, their role being to analyse the consistency between the learning outcomes and competences set out in the design and in professional practice.

- At least one *student*, who is taking one of the degree programmes being reviewed by the panel. His/her mission is to ensure that all of the aspects relative to student admission to the university, student support and learning are duly considered in the evaluation.

- A *secretary*, who is a member of ANECA and without the right to vote, whose role it is to assist the Chairperson in drawing up the review panel's reports.

When appropriate, outside experts may be assigned to the branch review panels to make additional assessments in the review process and supplement the views of the panel members by giving informed judgments on the design of the degree programme being evaluated.

The proceedings of the review panels are subject to collegiate responsibility and all of the panel members participate in assessing the degree designs that have been submitted. To avoid any conflict of interests, the academic reviewers are not allowed to be involved in review processes dealing with recognised degrees submitted by their own university. The panel's internal rules of procedure shall lay down the replacement mechanisms, where appropriate.

1.2. The Report Issuing Committee

The functions of the Report Issuing Committee are as follows:

- To issue the preliminary reports and review reports following the evaluation carried out by the branch review panels.
- To ensure consistency between the evaluations made by the branch review panels.
- To homogenise the benchmarks used in the evaluation and check that they are applied in a uniform way by all the branch review panels.
- To ensure that the reports comply with the legal framework.

In terms of its structure, the Report Issuing Committee is made up of:

- A chairperson, which is a position held by the Director of ANECA or a renowned expert from the academic field appointed by the ANECA Management, who is responsible for directing the panel's work and

drawing up the review report, which is referred to the Universities Council.

- The members comprise at least all the chairpersons of the review panels studying the assessments made of the different degree designs.
- One member who is a renowned professional or academic in the legal field, whose role it is to be the legal adviser.
- A secretary, who is a member of ANECA and without the right to vote, whose role it is to assist the Chairperson in drawing up the panel's reports.

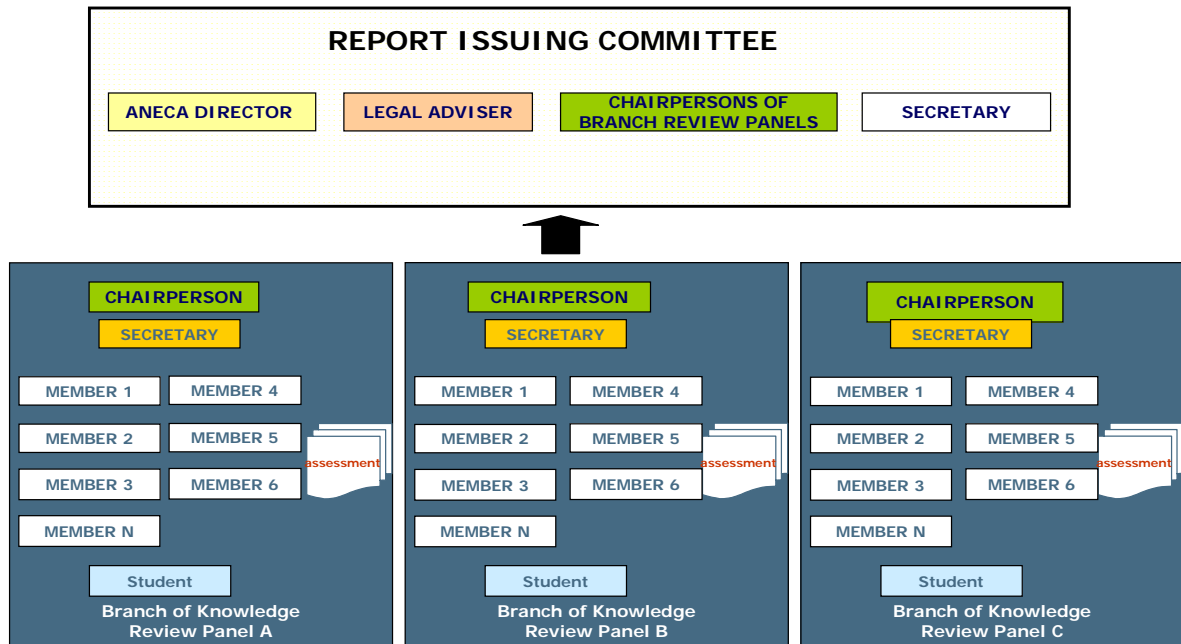
The proceedings of the Report Issuing Committee are subject to collegiate responsibility. Figure 1 gives a diagram of the structure of the branch review panels and the Report Issuing Committee.

1.3. Summary of the review process and the proceedings of the panels and Committee

A summary is given below of the complete review process, including the proceedings of the panels and Committee.

- When the completed *Memorandum for applications for the verification of a recognised degree programme* is received, it is assigned to the review panel that deals with the corresponding branch of knowledge. The Memorandum is evaluated by two members who act as spokespersons before the rest of the panel. The panel chairperson may request additional assessments from experts outside of the panel. These experts shall be chosen from the list obtained by applying the procedure described in section 4.

Figure 1. Structure of the review panels dealing with specific branches of knowledge and the Report Issuing Committee



*Each application Memorandum is assigned to a review panel that deals with a corresponding branch of knowledge.

- Once the spokesperson panel members and, where applicable, the experts have completed their evaluation, all of the information is pooled and the whole panel comes to an initial basis of agreement. A *draft preliminary review report* is drawn up with the conclusions reached in this meeting by the panel's secretary. The draft preliminary review report is then reviewed and signed by the chairperson.
- The chairperson of the review panel refers the draft preliminary review report to the Report Issuing Committee, which checks that it complies with the legal framework and is consistent and homogenous in terms of the criteria that have been applied. It then issues the *preliminary review report*, which is sent to the University. This preliminary report may include, where appropriate, enhancement proposals regarding the degree design.

- In the case where pleas are received from the universities, they are reviewed first by the spokesperson panel members and then jointly by the branch review panel, which refers a draft *review report* to the Report Issuing Committee.
- Based on the assessments made by the branch review panel of the pleas put forward by the universities, the Report Issuing Committee draws up the *review report* for each degree design, which will either be in favourable or unfavourable terms, that is then referred to the Universities Council.

The abovementioned process is laid out in Figure 2.

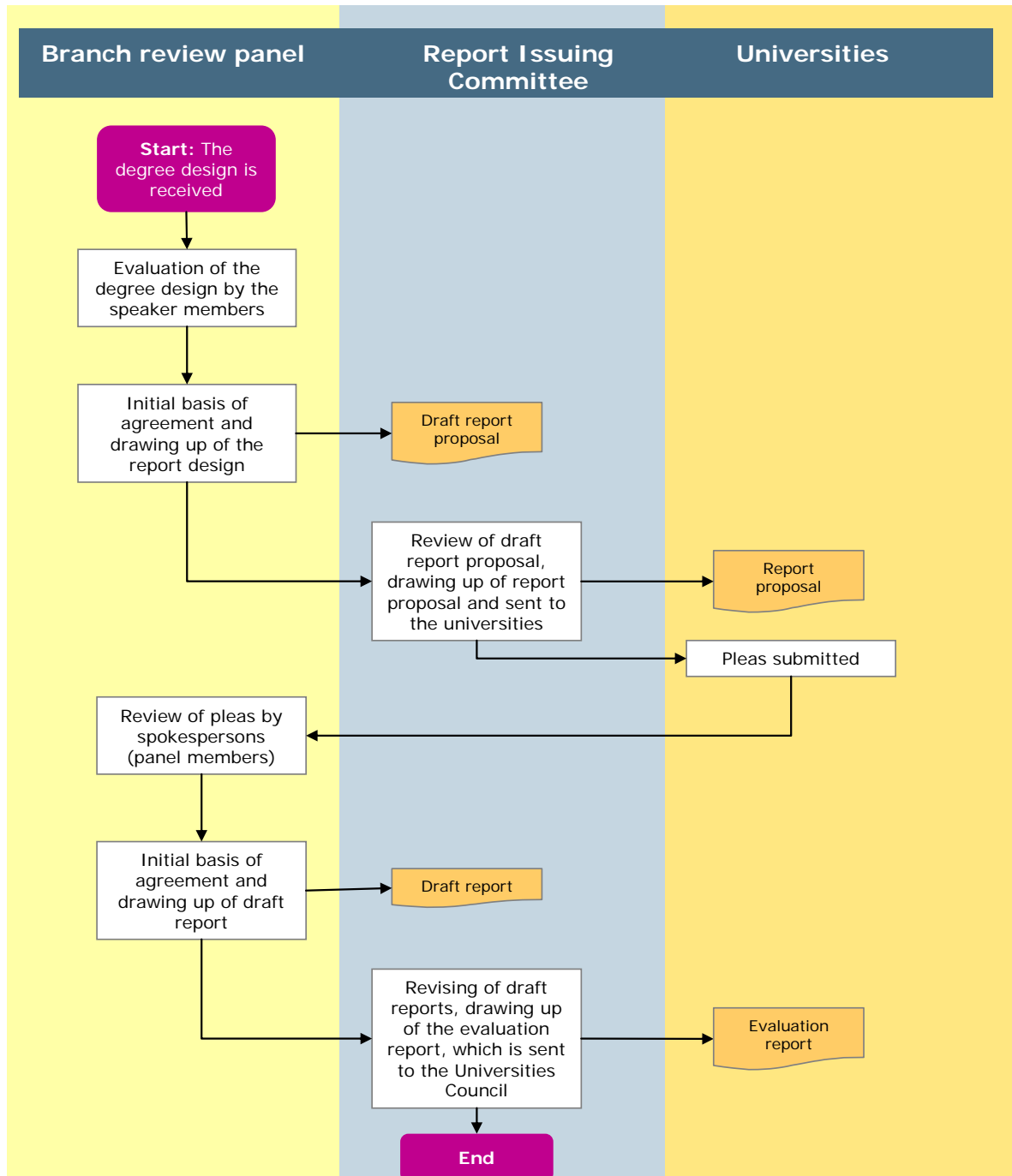
1.4. The appeals process and programme coordination and monitoring

When the universities receive the final verification resolution from the Universities Council, a time limit is set for any appeals to be submitted.

Appeals against the verification resolution, referred to ANECA by the Universities Council, are reviewed by the *branch review panels* and the *ANECA Resources Committee*.

The function of this panel, which is not exclusive to the VERIFICA programme, is to review all pleas put forward as a result of review processes carried out by ANECA.

Figure 2. The review process and the proceedings of the branch review panels and the Report Issuing Committee



¹ <http://www.aneca.es>

2. PROFILES, SOURCES AND GENERAL CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF REVIEWERS AND EXTERNAL EXPERTS

The panel members and external experts are independent reviewers from Spain and abroad with academic careers that are appropriate to the functions required of them.

Their selection is made on the basis of the following merits:

Academic reviewers:

- ✓ Knowledge and experience in the design and administration of university degrees.
- ✓ Knowledge and experience in the evaluation of university degrees.
- ✓ Knowledge and experience in quality assurance systems in the university or in other fields.
- ✓ Experience in innovation projects and the implementation of new EHEA-related models.
- ✓ Experience in other activities connected with quality assurance in Higher Education.

Professional reviewers:

- ✓ Professional experience associated with the degrees subject to review.
- ✓ Experience in review processes in the field of Higher Education.
- ✓ Experience in quality assurance systems.

Students:

- ✓ Experience in evaluation processes in the university, especially in programme evaluation.
- ✓ Representatives of legally established student associations.

- ✓ Participation in governing bodies in the university.

Reviewer selection for these various profiles is carried out as follows:

- In the case of reviewers with an academic profile, selection is made according to the process described in section 3. As an indicator for the suitability of the academic career, the requirement has been set for panel members to have a minimum of two recognised research periods² and a balanced relation between research and teaching. In exceptional cases, members with just one period of recognised research are accepted in some fields. In the case of private universities, the curriculum vitae of candidates is analysed in order for a judgment to be issued regarding the equivalence of research merits. International academic reviewers with experience in degree programme evaluation are selected from the ANECA databases and those of other European agencies.
- Reviewers with a professional profile and experience in degree programme evaluation are selected from the ANECA databases and those of other European agencies.
- Students are selected from proposals put forward by legally established student organisations and on the basis of the fact they have experience in programme evaluation.

The ANECA Management appoints the panel members from the applicants who fulfil the above criteria.

In addition, the criterion of diversity is taken into account in relation to:

- The academic and professional fields, in order for there to be a balanced representation from both fields in each branch of knowledge.

² Translator's note: Recognised periods of research in Spain are six years long.

- Regional representation: reviewers from the different regional Autonomous Communities in Spain.
- Gender: a balanced number of men and women.

3. REVIEWER SELECTION PROCESS

The selection procedure for academic reviewers consists of four stages:

- A public call and a decision regarding the number of panel members.
- Application of the eligibility requirements and the suitability parameter.
- Peer review.
- Selection and appointment of panel members.

Each of these stages is described below.

3.1. Invitation to participate in the review panels

The procedure is based on an open invitation to participate on the ANECA web page, through which anyone who is interested can express their willingness to act as panel members.

With the data obtained from this invitation on the website, a database is set up with the relevant information for selection purposes provided by the candidates. This information is used to set up a database according to the established branches of knowledge (Arts and Humanities, Sciences, Social and Legal Sciences, Health Sciences, and Engineering and Architecture), which is then broken down into academic specialisations, and divided up according to gender.

The number of academic members per branch review panel for Bachelor degrees is set according to the expected demand for degrees. For this purpose, an analysis was made of the degree programmes introduced in

Spanish universities, according to the Ministry Education and Science's Register of Universities, Faculties, Member Institutes and Degree Programmes.

The number of academic reviewers in each branch review panel is determined by the abovementioned analysis, which may vary according to the branch of knowledge. In addition, there is the member with international experience, one or more professional members and one student.

3.2. Application of the eligibility requirements and the suitability parameter.

Using the abovementioned database, an appropriate number of candidates is selected for the post of each member that is to be designated. The **eligibility requirements** for academic reviewer selection as a panel member, which are set out in section 2, are applied to the lists.

The suitability parameter is calculated in each list according to field of knowledge and gender, as well as on the basis of experience in administration, design and evaluation.

In relation to experience in administration, merit is given to having held the post of:

- Rector or Vice-Rector.
- Dean or Vice-Dean.
- Head of Department.

In relation to experience in design, it is considered an advantage to have:

- Knowledge and experience in degree design and administration.
- Experience in innovation projects and the implementation of new EHEA-related models.

- Experience in activities connected with the quality assurance of Higher Education.
- Participated in the drawing up of the consultation documents (*libros blancos*) for the ANECA European Convergence Programme.
- Knowledge and experience in the design and implementation of quality assurance systems in the university.
- Knowledge and experience in the design and implementation of quality assurance systems in other fields.

In relation to experience in evaluation, it is considered an advantage to:

- Have been a reviewer in the Institutional Evaluation Programme; the ANECA PhD Quality Label Programme; of recognised postgraduate programmes; to be a member of the panels/committees responsible for advising the CNAI in its evaluation work; the ANEP; other curriculum evaluations; the evaluation of university services; or a reviewer of European R+D programmes.

A threshold is set for each field and according to gender to ensure a minimum level of quality. In exceptional cases where there is an insufficient number of reviewers, external candidates are used.

3.3. Peer review

Applications that pass the set standards are assessed by academic peers and professional experts from:

- The ANECA Technical Commission
- Chairpersons of the current review panels in the PhD Quality Label programme (one per branch of knowledge)
- Standing Committee of the ANECA Advisory Board

The purpose of peer review is to validate the results obtained in the first stage, a process which is confidential.

The ANECA Technical Commission approves the lists on the basis of the assessment made. If there is an insufficient number of experts in any field, a special public call may be made to meet any requirements for experts in such fields. Specialists will also be invited to take part either in the review panels or as experts (see section 4), and these will need to comply with the requirements given in section 2 and be validated by peers. They must also be proposed by the academic coordinators in the universities and the evaluation authorities.

3.4. Reviewer selection and appointment

On the basis of the information obtained in the selection process, the selected applicants will be invited to participate in the ANECA reviewer training programme.

The Technical Commission draws up a proposed list of panel members, which is submitted to the Board of Management for approval, taking into account the performance of the applicants in the training programme and the ideal number of members for each branch review panel.

The setting up of the panels and their appointment by the ANECA Management takes place after the short-listed candidates have taken part in a programme presentation workshop, and once it is assured that the candidates really wish to participate and have accepted the Code of Ethics.

The chairperson of each branch review panel is selected and appointed by the ANECA Management from the academic members of each panel.

Panel members are designated for three years. At the end of this time, 50% of the reviewers are replaced. The other 50% continue in the position for a fourth year. From this time onwards, all reviewers will be appointed for three years.

ANECA will open successive public calls to attract volunteers to form part of the reviewers database for the programme.

It will also invite proposals from academic coordinators in the universities and evaluation bodies concerning experts to be validated.

4. THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR EXTERNAL EXPERTS

As stated in section 1 on the function, structure and proceedings of the panels, recourse can be made, when required in the review process, to the participation of external experts.

The review panel chairpersons may call for additional assessments from other external experts to complete the assessments of the members of the panels in fields or aspects where this is necessary. A report by an expert in quality assurance systems will, in any case, be necessary.

The chairpersons select experts from a list prioritised according to academic and professional fields. The list will be made up of experts who have been selected by the procedure followed in section 2 and who are not included in any review panel.

The following considerations shall be taken into account regarding the designation of experts:

- An expert may not be from the same university that submits the degree for verification.
- If more than one expert evaluates the design, the experts concerned must not be from the same university.

The appointment of external experts is made by the ANECA Management.