

**Panel report of the external review of the Holy See's Agency for the  
Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and  
Faculties (AVEPRO)**

**December 2013**

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## 1. Executive Summary

This report presents the panel's main findings and considerations of the external review of the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO). Being a "type A" review, the purpose of the review was to evaluate the way in which and to what extent AVEPRO fulfils the criteria for the full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), as well as Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

AVEPRO was established on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2007 with the mission of promoting and developing a culture of quality within the academic institutions that depend directly on the Holy See and ensure they possess internationally valid quality criteria, as established by the Bologna Process. The trans-national dimension of AVEPRO activities is a unique characteristic that has been considered by the Panel members throughout the entire review exercise. This is the first time AVEPRO undergoes an external evaluation against the ENQA membership criteria and, thereby, the ESG.

The Holy See's Congregation for Catholic Education (public authority with competences in higher education) commissioned ENQA for coordinating the external review of the agency. An international panel was appointed to carry out this review. Experts worked following the ENQA Guidelines for External Reviews of Quality Assurance Agencies in the European Higher Education Area.

The self-evaluation report, documentation supplied, interviews held during the site visit give the review Panel sufficient evidence to come to the following conclusions:

- ENQA criterion 1a / ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes  
*Substantial compliance*
- ENQA criterion 1b / ESG 3.1, 3.3 Activities  
*Full compliance*
- ENQA criterion 2 / ESG 3.2 Official status  
*Full compliance*
- ENQA criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources  
*Substantial compliance*
- ENQA criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement  
*Full compliance*
- ENQA criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence  
*Full compliance*
- ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies  
*Full compliance*
- ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures  
*Substantial compliance*
- ENQA Criterion 8 / Miscellaneous  
*Full compliance*

The review Panel was aware of the mood for change in some of the governance structures of the Holy See. The team noted the air of confidence and openness with which the Agency viewed the future and wishes them every success in the coming period. We hope that this report together with its recommendations will be of help to the Agency in planning for that future.

## 2. Glossary

<b>AKAST</b>	the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany
<b>APSA</b>	Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See
<b>AVEPRO, the Agency</b>	Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties
<b>BoD</b>	AVEPRO's Board of Directors
<b>CCE</b>	Congregation for Catholic Education
<b>CIC</b>	Codex iuris canonici / Code of Canon Law
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>EHEA</b>	European Higher Education Area
<b>ENQA</b>	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
<b>ENQA Guidelines</b>	Guidelines for External Reviews of Quality Assurance Agencies in the European Higher Education Area (2012)
<b>EQAR</b>	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
<b>ESG</b>	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
<b>ESU</b>	The European Students' Union
<b>EUA</b>	European University Association
<b>EUA IEP</b>	European University Association's Institutional evaluation procedure
<b>Ex Corde Ecclesiae</b>	Apostolic Constitution <i>Ex Corde Ecclesiae</i> on Catholic Universities and Faculties
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution(s)
<b>INQAAHE</b>	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
<b>IT</b>	Refers to documents in Italian language
<b>Pastor Bonus</b>	Apostolic Constitution <i>Pastor Bonus</i> (1988)
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>SapChr</b>	Apostolic Constitution <i>Sapientia christiana</i> of Pope John Paul II on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (1979)
<b>SER</b>	AVEPRO's self-evaluation report
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference, setting the present review conditions

### 3. Introduction

This is the report of the external review of AVEPRO undertaken in between July and December 2013 for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the criteria for full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and also complies with the ESG.

#### 3.1. Background and outline of the review process

AVEPRO is affiliated to ENQA from 2007, and the Agency has aspirations to join this pan-European network as full member. By the Statutes art.5.1, Full Membership of ENQA is open to European quality assurance agencies or other quality assurance organisations in the field of higher education that have been operating and conducting actual quality assurance activities for at least two years. AVEPRO, being established in 2007, clearly satisfies this expectation.

In addition, ENQA membership criterion 7 requires a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its (then) regulations (now statutes). Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for the membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005. The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

This external review exercise was commissioned by the Congregation for Catholic Education (Holy See authority with competences in higher education) to ENQA for its coordination. It was conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*, in observance of ENQA *Code of Conduct* for review experts, and in accordance with the Terms of Reference ([Annex I](#)). As a "type A" review, the focus is upon the current status of AVEPRO, even though reasonable note is taken of the upcoming developments.

In accordance with the ENQA Guidelines, the review is an evidence-based process carried out by independent experts. The review Panel for the external review of AVEPRO was composed of the following members:

- Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Deputy Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania – Review Chair, subsequently also responsible for drafting the review report,
- Dr. Séamus Puirseil, President of the Dublin Business School, Ireland,
- Dr. theol. Øystein Lund, Dean of Studies/(Vice Rector) of the MF Norwegian School of Theology, Norway,
- Dr. Rozilini M Fernandez-Chung, Vice President of the HELP University, Malaysia,
- Mr. Fernando M Galán Palomares, Student at the University of Cantabria, Spain; Vice Chairperson of ESU – initially Secretary, then team member.

AVEPRO produced a self-evaluation report that provided a substantial portion of the evidence that the Panel used to form its conclusions. It should be noted that the information provided by the Agency is assumed to be factually correct unless other evidence points to the contrary. The review is a process of verification of the information provided in the self-evaluation report and other documentation, and the exploration of any matters that are omitted from that documentation.

During the preparatory work for the site visit, the Panel requested from AVEPRO additional evidence which was readily provided on site. Documentation given by the agency and other reference sources used by the experts are listed in [Annex II](#). Sources analysed also included information on multilingual AVEPRO website, most extensively – English and Italian versions (<http://www.avepro.va>).

The panel conducted a site-visit to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review. Before the site visit, the panel approved the interpreter, who was an external to the Agency's operations. Knowledge of Italian language by review Secretary also was useful to analyze evidence submitted in this language.

Logistical support for the visit was kindly arranged by joint efforts of CCE, ENQA Secretariat and AVEPRO itself. The Review Panel received telephone briefing by ENQA Secretariat member on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. The draft visit agenda template was proposed by the Agency, and agreed with the Review Panel. The whole team met in the Vatican city on the day before the site visit and hold a preparatory meeting. Review Secretary prepared a mapping grid, based on the ENQA membership provisions/ESG, which was used before and during the two working days of meetings and at the end of the visit to discuss among Panel members and find agreement on expert views about the Agency's standing in relation to the assessment criteria. During the visit, ENQA Director acted as a silent observer without any interference into the review process, and, notably, was absent from the last meeting of the Panel which was devoted to debating overall Panel findings in private. Prior the visit, a request was received from another quality agency (currently not the full member of ENQA) to also observe the visit, however, it was declined in adherence to ENQA procedures that only one external observer is allowed per visit. The schedule of meetings can be found in [Annex III](#).

The electronic mail was the main channel of Panel members work prior to and after the site-visit. Initially, duties of Panel Members were assumed in line with ENQA Guidelines for External Agency Reviews and ToR. However, after the site visit, because of the difficulties encountered in performing secretarial functions, subsequent readjustments in roles and the timeline were made. The present review report was started by Secretary, and then drafted by Review Chair with active contribution of other Panel members.

After initial analysis of SER, members of the Panel decided to further ask for documentation from the Agency. These included a clarification on the scope of AVEPRO responsibilities, details on appeals procedure (even though no accreditation decisions are taken), more information on the expert database, materials describing the situation concerning the relation between AVEPRO, the Congregation for Catholic Education and the bishops (conferences), and information on the relations with AKAST. The Review panel also requested expert training

materials, documentation of the whole review process (several folios), and evidence of meetings with stakeholder.

A site visit to AVEPRO office took place on July 7-9, 2013. As mentioned already, the first day was devoted to Panel's preparation, while during the next two days the Panel held 18 meetings, and met more than 50 persons (several of them more than once) from the following groups:

- Secretariat of State (namely – the Secretary in his office),
- APSA (namely – Head of Unit),
- officials from the Congregation for Catholic Education,
- members of AVEPRO Board of Directors,
- AVEPRO Scientific Council members,
- AVEPRO leadership and staff,
- religious superiors,
- Rectors and Pro Rectors of Ecclesiastical higher education institutions,
- General Secretaries of Pontifical universities,
- Deans of Ecclesiastical faculties,
- Quality Assurance directors / officers in Ecclesiastical Faculties,
- Bologna and site visit experts (including from non-Italian faculties),
- representatives of stakeholders and network,
- students.

In three meetings, video conferencing was used to connect and converse with several persons, including one member of AVEPRO Board of Directors, also site visit experts, and students. In the discussions at AVEPRO, all Panel members actively contributed with questions and comments. In several meetings consecutive translation between Italian and English was needed and used.

At the end of the first and second day of the site visit the Review Panel met with the President and Director of AVEPRO to review progress and to receive materials on matters of concern identified by the Panel.

The site visit was very conducive to developing better understanding of the role of AVEPRO within a very complex higher education system of the Holy See, and triangulation of data of SER both with AVEPRO staff and stakeholders. The Panel is grateful for all who were available to meet in person, including those the linkage with whom was established by videoconference, and especially representatives of institutions not based in Vatican city and Italy, who travelled to meet the Panel from abroad, including the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Austria, Poland. Meetings with other stakeholders, including Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) helped to see the larger context and expectations regarding AVEPRO as the quality agency in the future developments. The Panel wishes to confirm that meetings took place in a very friendly and productive atmosphere, and facilitated the gathering information and clarifying points for work under the review procedure.

Finally, the review Panel produced the present final report on the basis of versatile sources: the self-evaluation report, the site-visit and its findings. It covers the agency's standing against each ENQA membership criteria, thus against compliance to ESG Part II and III. The Panel provided an opportunity for AVEPRO to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. To reiterate, the review report represents judgments reached by a broad consensus of the team members. The final report was produced subsequently and submitted to ENQA and CCE.

## Acknowledgements

The Panel accepted an invitation to work on the external review of AVEPRO on a relatively short notice, therefore, support from ENQA Secretariat, Congregation for Catholic Education, and AVEPRO itself was very appreciated. The Agency prepared for the review visit very intensively and diligently, while planning and coordinating meetings with all members of AVEPRO (including Board of Directors and Scientific Council) and external stakeholders, for several of whom it involved international travel. The Panel is grateful for all who contributed to the very efficient site visit and, ultimately, gathering of solid body of evidence towards AVEPRO's implementation of ESG. It all attests to the high value of work the Agency does in fulfilling its mission.

### **3.2. National and international context**

AVEPRO notes in their SER, that being the Holy See's Agency for quality assurance means that its activities are global, that their "national" dimension should be regarded as "universal" dimension.

The Holy See's higher education system is characterised by a variety of institutions, mainly falling into two broadest categories according to the purpose and content of study programmes:

- Ecclesiastical Universities, Faculties, Athenaeums, and also other institutions (affiliated, aggregated, incorporated, Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences – HIRS), all governed by Apostolic Constitution "Sapientia Christiana";
- Catholic Universities and Faculties, governed by Apostolic Constitution "Ex corde ecclesiae".

An Ecclesiastical Faculty can either be a freestanding Institution, be inserted within an Ecclesiastical or a Catholic University, or be inserted within another public or a private University. Ecclesiastical Institutions might be located all around the world, but they comply with the regulations of the Holy See, such as "Code of Canon Law" and the Apostolic Constitution "Sapientia Christiana".

Catholic Universities differ from Ecclesiastical Institutions in that their Faculties are identical to those of State or private Universities rather than to those of the Catholic Church. Their degrees are awarded and recognized in accordance with the national laws and regulations in force in the countries in which they are placed.

Another distinct feature of the Holy See's system is the size of this higher education structure – amounting to 1861 institutions total – which could be named of truly global reach by presence in Africa, North America, Central America, South America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Specifically, there are over 650 Ecclesiastical Academic Institutions around the world, of which more than 370 are located in Europe. The latter number includes affiliated, aggregated and incorporated institutes (collectively called "connected institutions"), which do not depend directly from the Holy See, but from their *mother* institution. Currently, AVEPRO is only responsible for quality assurance in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties that have power to confer academic degrees under authority of the Holy See, the total quantity of such entities is 258 around the world. Yet, as discussed within AVEPRO's Scientific Council already in their first meeting in 2010, other institutions (e.g. Catholic universities) could be evaluated by AVEPRO in the future.

It is important to underscore, that both higher education institutions and AVEPRO as the quality agency, deal with double set of requirements and expectations – secular and Ecclesiastical. During the meetings with AVEPRO staff, as well as with representatives of institutions, the review Panel formed a view of them being very conscious of challenges this double facets pose – “to endeavour to relate human affairs and activities with religious values in a single living synthesis” (SapChr).

As noted in SER, for successful work of the Agency, cooperation with several local and international stakeholders is important.

The Congregation for Catholic Education is, according to the Code of Canon Law (c. 816) and the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, the body of the Holy See that has been entrusted with the authority to govern and coordinate training and higher education. The CCE cannot issue laws or general decrees having the force of law, nor derogate from the prescriptions of current universal law, except in individual cases and with the specific approval of the Pope (cf. *Pastor Bonus*, 18). The Congregation for Catholic Education is responsible for all aspects of the Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties and this is provided for in Articles 4 and 5 of the Apostolic Constitution, “*Sapientia Christiana*” on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. It is CCE that issues accreditation of universities and faculties, and the right to take medial action, if necessary as a result of issues highlighted in the institutional review reports.

Episcopal Conferences have the right to establish Catholic Universities or Faculties devoted to teaching and researching the most varied subjects, fully respecting their scientific independence (cf. *CIC*, c. 809; *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 3). Episcopal Conferences take responsibility for the quality of teaching and must oversee its assurance through adequate measures (which imply participation in evaluation and accreditation through dedicated commissions).

Chancellors promote the continuation and progress of the Ecclesiastical University or Faculty (cf. SapChr, 12; SapChrOrd, 18). Hence, they are responsible for quality assurance, which also means improving the quality of teaching and research.

Aside relations with above mentioned bodies, AVEPRO works with other agencies and entities aimed at providing value to the higher education system. The Agency is not only affiliate of ENQA from December 2007, but also cooperates and takes part in events of another network – a global one – INQAAHE.

### 3.3. The Holy See in the Bologna Process

The Holy See joined the Bologna Process at the Ministerial Conference held in Berlin in 2003. It happened on the initiative of the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Secretariat of State, with a view that “such an open space of dialogue between countries is also a privileged area for a necessary, ever-renewed dialogue between reason and faith, between culture and religion” (*Letter to All European Institutions, dated Feb 22, 2010*).

Noteworthy, quality assurance is one of the main four action lines in the Bologna Process. As referred in SER, the need for securing appropriate participation in this overall route of reforms in Europe, including focus on quality as value, intrinsic to

and necessary for research and innovation in the faculties and universities, was one of the sources for considerations to establish AVEPRO.

Already from the outset, the Scientific Council of AVEPRO suggested methodological framework for assessment of Ecclesiastical Faculties and Universities being based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as adopted by Education Ministers in 2005.

In the last Bologna Process Implementation Report (2012), several challenges pertaining to the higher education system of the Holy See are mentioned. Some of these can and should be addressed on the institutional level, such as work to be done to complete introduction of ECTS credits used for transfer and accumulation; the need to all parts of programmes comprehensively and systematically link to learning outcomes; and to issue Diploma Supplements to all graduates. Other questions pertain to the system level, or, rather multiple educational systems, such as work towards the goal of widening participation in higher education; legislation regarding joint degrees lacking clarity, in effect allowing joint programmes to operate, but not allowing joint degrees to be awarded; increasing the share of students enrolled in programmes corresponding to the Bologna two-cycle system. Yet other set of issues require wider consolidated efforts, namely, the need to proceed from initial and fundamental discussions with all stakeholders to further steps in implementation of the national qualifications framework.

Notably, the above mentioned report clearly states, that the Holy See presents a special case, as its higher education institutions are mainly located outside its own territory, and, therefore, they follow diverse patterns in terms of the education provision. The Holy See takes cognizance of this and allows the necessary freedom to the universities and faculties to provide for local variations (pg. 14 Apostolic Constitution, "*Sapientia Christiana*" on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties).

Some of the challenges, identified in the Bologna Progress implementation report, to be addressed in the future do not relate to quality assurance *per se*, yet others, such as implementation of the learning outcomes approach and the national qualifications framework in broad terms fall within matters of interest to external quality assurance.

It is worthwhile to mention that the Holy See is party to the Council of Europe and the UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (CETS No.: 165) (popular abbreviation – Lisbon Recognition Convention) [Signature put on 11/4/1997, ratification made on 28/2/2001, entry into force recorded on 1/4/2001]. Among local partners of AVEPRO, there is CIMEA (Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche) – trusted ENIC/NARIC and MERIC centre in Italy, and colleagues at CCE, also performing functions of ENIC centre of the Holy See.

### **3.4. AVEPRO**

#### **3.4.1. Legal framework**

On September 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO) was established by the Pope Benedict XVI. It is an Institution connected to the Holy See, as provided

by arts. 186 and 190-191 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, yet an independent in its operations.

This connectedness to the Holy See entails that although in general operational terms the Agency is autonomous, it still can and occasionally does receive support (also in terms of human resources and services) from other Holy See Institutions.

AVEPRO's statutes allow the creation of regional components across Europe. Article 4.1 states that AVEPRO "can be articulated into more regional subcomponents in order to meet particular necessities or requests from various countries or geographical areas". Under Article 4.2 of the Statutes it is articulated that the establishment or approval of the regional subcomponents mentioned in the previous paragraph lies with the Secretariat of State. The review Panel is informed that an initial plan to that end was already drafted. In addition, it was made known to the team, that the Secretariat of State, the Congregation for Catholic Education and AVEPRO were discussing the position of AKAST which could potentially become an AVEPRO Regional Branch in Germany.

### **3.4.2. Mission, aims, objectives and activities**

AVEPRO mission is to promote and develop a culture of quality within the Academic Institutions that depend directly on the Holy See and ensure they possess internationally valid quality criteria, as established by the Bologna Process.

Although at the present time AVEPRO is only responsible for external QA of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, which have been erected or approved by the Congregation for Catholic Education and have the power to confer academic degrees under the authority of the Holy See, nevertheless, as was already mentioned, other Institutions (e.g. Catholic Universities) could be evaluated by AVEPRO in the future.

In SER, the main objectives of the Agency are listed as follows:

- Ensuring the structure and organization of AVEPRO are sufficient to achieve its goals and objectives, and to secure adequate resources (financial, human, etc.) to support on-going activities,
- Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in Ecclesiastical Faculties,
- Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance,
- Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis,
- Communication and Institutional relations.

Guiding values of AVEPRO echo the general norms of the Holy See in relation to higher education – a spirit of leadership and independence, transparency and accountability, respect for traditions and ethos of individual institutions, flexibility and responsiveness to change and evidence-based decision making.

### **3.4.3. Main activities**

AVEPRO's goal is to help Ecclesiastical Institutions in developing internal quality assurance processes, creating a meaningful culture of quality in all their activities, including teaching, research and services. This complex task requires close collaboration between the Agency and institutions scattered around the world,

operating in different cultures (including varying cultures of steering higher education), and different languages.

For fulfilling its enhancement-oriented aim, AVEPRO provides external evaluation of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, assists them in strategic planning and improvement based on the outcomes of the evaluations, and develops training activities and tools for the members of the academic community.

#### 3.4.4. Organisational structure

As described in SER, the broad organisational structure of AVEPRO consists of the President, the Board of Directors (nine members), the Scientific Council<sup>1</sup> (13 members) and four core staff members. In its operational structure, AVEPRO has Director, Chief Executive Officer, Reviews Manager, and Administrative Secretary.

Following the general mode of operations within agencies of the Holy See, all appointments – of the President of the Agency, of the members of the Board of Directors, and of the members of the Scientific Council – are made by the Pope. Equally, all appointments are for a five-year term, which might be renewed only once.

The President runs and represents the Agency, he also nominates the members of the Board of Directors (including a student representative) and the members of the Scientific Council (the latter are proposed after consultation with the BoD). The Board of Directors approves the main goals, supervises the activities of the Agency, and monitors its results.

The Scientific Council, currently of 13 members, may be composed of a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 persons, including at least one student. The Scientific Council should provide reasoned advice on the external quality assurance activities, as well as on the selection and training of the review experts. The review Panel is aware that their agenda is not limited to the above listed items only.

The article 9.3 of the *Statutes* specifies that the Scientific Council is comprised of the following ex-officio members:

- the President of the Rectors' Conference of Pontifical Universities or his delegate;
- one delegate of the International Federation of Catholic Universities;
- one delegate of the Federation of European Catholic Universities;
- one representative of the students of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties.

The President chairs both the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council.

The Director of the Agency, a delegate of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State; and a delegate of the Congregation for Catholic Education are invited to the meetings of the Scientific Council as observers. The President has a right to also invite other observers.

The Director of the Agency is appointed by the President of the Agency with the approval of the Secretariat of State and of the Administration of the Patrimony of

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<sup>1</sup> the title "Scientific Council" is used in AVEPRO's SER and in minutes of meetings, it is called "Scientific Committee" in the Statutes; for the purpose of this report, the term Scientific Council is used

the Apostolic See (APSA). The Director, following guidance given by the President, coordinates the activities of the office and staff for the fulfilment of the programs and tasks of the Agency; and takes care of the administration of AVEPRO. Other staff members are hired by the President, upon consent from the Secretariat of State and APSA from distinguished persons with appropriate values and adequate qualifications.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. ENQA criterion 1 (ESG Part II and ESG 3.1, 3.3)

This ENQA criterion is divided into two parts:

- a) Individual standards of ESG part II;
- b) Standards 3.1 and 3.3.

Given the following analysis of the individual standards the Panel has found and overall substantial compliance with part a) and full compliance with both standards in part b).

#### 4.1.1. ESG 2.1 - Use of internal quality assurance procedures

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

##### a) EVIDENCE

Both in the "*Briefing Note for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. The Nature, Context and Purpose of Quality Assurance*" and the document entitled "*Internal Evaluation Quality Assurance Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties*", AVEPRO states its aim to work in close harmony with the institutions both in accordance to the framework established by the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* and in order to satisfy requirements of ESG. It is acknowledged that "quality assurance in universities did not begin with the Bologna Process", and that to the extent it was always implicit that institutions take care of quality and effectiveness of their degree programmes and research activity through a variety of instruments. However, it is also pointed that "the contemporary emergence of formalised quality improvement and assurance systems represent another stage in this evolution." It is underscored, that "procedures must promote academic and organisational quality, develop internal quality cultures, minimise bureaucracy, be cost-effective and avoid over regulation".

At the same time, the Agency is very aware that within institutions, it is "likely to find initially a low level of understanding of modern QA processes, limited QA competences and no tradition of strategic planning or awareness of the connection between strategic planning and QA". In both of the above referred documents, AVEPRO describes tensions between bottom-up and top-down approaches and expectations towards institutional performance from various stakeholders; and talks extensively about basic principles and values in quality assurance, such as robustness, shared responsibility and involvement of academics and students, self-reflection and honest critique.

The methodology, drafted during the Pilot project AVEPRO had in 2008, is based on the best practice as developed by the EUA for its institutional evaluation procedure; AVEPRO further acknowledges usage made of materials developed by colleagues in Ireland (Irish Universities Quality Board and University College Dublin). Key strands include internal responsibility of universities and faculties towards assuring quality, and the organisation of external procedures organised and carried out by AVEPRO being reliant on the results and findings of internal processes.

In the meeting with Deans, the review Panel was assured on the connection between internal quality assurance procedures, production of SER, and usage of its findings towards the external procedures and recommendations given by external reviewers. During the meetings with Rectors and Vice-Rectors of higher education institutions, as well as with General Secretaries, it was much appreciated the positive changes that establishment of AVEPRO brought into the higher education system of the Holy See. It was testified, that to date quality of activities was taken care by various means and bodies (such as religious orders), and AVEPRO contributed towards a more systemic approach and synergy of efforts. Simultaneously, the Panel formed a view that, similar to other higher education systems around Europe, within Ecclesiastical institutions there still was a need to overcome the perception of quality assurance being an extra burden on the shoulders of academic staff.

The review Panel was positively struck by the presence of quality culture, the inherent care for quality and acceptance of external quality assurance results (even in case they would not be entirely affirmative) by leaders of higher education institutions.

#### b) ANALYSIS

To the extent AVEPRO draws on the EUA Institutional evaluation procedure (IEP), its methodology is of more generous nature when compared to standards and guidelines of ESG part I applicable towards higher education institutions. EUA-IEP procedure asks four basic questions: what the institution is trying to do, how it is working, how it knows it works, and how it is changing in order to improve. Quality assurance matters would then fall within the purview of the second question – how an institution is functioning, yet not to the great detail.

Both in the *Briefing Note* and *Internal Evaluation Guidelines* AVEPRO provides extensive quotations of ESG, summaries of what internal procedures could look like and what responsibilities of Quality Office would normally include (with an explicit reference to the fact that appropriate scaled-down version would be suitable for smaller institutions). The Panel understood, that respecting institutional autonomy and diversity, the Agency did not want to be overly prescriptive, and as a result did not address the ESG criteria on a 'one by one' basis.

Some of the key areas for quality assurance, provided in ESG part I, have not been explicitly reported upon in the review procedures (e.g. assessment of the presence of a strategy, policy and procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of the programmes and awards; availability of formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of programmes and awards). In the methodology and reports, the emphasis is more on the institutional activities (mission and strategy, provision of studies, research, infrastructure etc.), rather than on assurance of their quality as promoted by ESG part I. To the extent AVEPRO follows EUA methodology, it faces the same difficulties in relation to implementation of ESG, as EUA was found not fully complying during the course of its external review.

The review Panel understood that student appreciation of quality assurance strands and their participation in relevant processes has yet to grow stronger. Given the young age of AVEPRO and the number of reviews conducted till now, at the

moment there are no provisions for less intensive procedures in respect to those universities and faculties that are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes. This should not be judged at the disadvantage of AVEPRO, since relates to the fact that the Agency is implementing the first cycle of external reviews and is far from approaching the end of it in terms of the number of institutions that depend directly on the Holy See. The review Panel was assured by AVEPRO staff that these provisions were being considered and appropriate procedures would be developed in the future.

c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

d) COMMENDATION

Work by AVEPRO is much appreciated by Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties belonging to the system of the Holy See as giving synergy effect in efforts to promote quality in higher education exercised by variety of internal actors and external bodies.

e) RECOMMENDATION

AVEPRO should revisit its review methodology to more fully encompass expectations for internal quality assurance arrangements within higher education institutions as laid down in ESG part I.

**4.1.2. ESG 2.2 - Development of external quality assurance processes**

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

a) EVIDENCE

In the SER, AVEPRO describes a pilot project on internal quality assurance and quality improvement, implemented from January to December 2008. For the project Ecclesiastical Faculties two each in Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain (total – eight Faculties), covering a variety of institutional types, were selected to take part. During this exercise, to facilitate and guide the institutions in establishing appropriate procedures, Guidelines, detailing various steps in the evaluation and review process, were written. They cover the preparation of a self-evaluation report by the Faculty, the site visit, the report by a team of peers, and the follow-up and execution of recommendations for improvements by the means of an action plan. Also, during the pilot project, questionnaires for internal evaluation have been collected and reviewed, with the aim to offer them as templates.

These were confirmed at the review Panel meeting with at least one senior representative from the selected eight European Faculties and members of AVEPRO Scientific Council and Board of Directors. Consultations with these three groups of stakeholders in the development of the institutional review methodology were largely seen as collegial and necessary.

Prior to AVEPRO's commencement of its formal activities, circular letters were sent by the Congregation for Catholic Education to inform Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties about the recent developments in the Bologna Process. In 2010 AVEPRO notified all European institutions of its operations and tasks. This was to draw attention to important contextual information and lay foundations for starting more systemic quality assurance activities.

The Agency has developed and published documentation regarding underlying considerations and values in quality assurance, their external evaluation procedure, and guidance towards institutional activities, such as:

- General Principles on External Review;
- Time Scale for a Quality Review of a Unit;
- Briefing Note for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. The Nature, Context and Purpose of Quality Assurance;
- Internal Evaluation Quality Assurance Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties;
- SER Self Evaluation Report. External Review Format;
- Preparing the Self-Evaluation Report. Notes of Guidance for Faculties and Service Units;
- Peer Review and Site Visit;
- Form for External Evaluation;
- Quality Improvement Plan. Notes of Guidance;
- Questionnaires (introduction to them and nine kinds of questionnaires for different target audiences).

The above mentioned documents are published on the website under categories of "General documents", "Internal evaluation documents", "External evaluation documents", and "Evaluation tools". The aims and objectives of external quality assurance are indicated clearly; during the site visit, institutional stakeholders confirmed that they are able to obtain clarification easily if required from AVEPRO officers.

## b) ANALYSIS

The Agency in developing its procedures involved stakeholders, and publishes them on AVEPRO's website. The publications contain explicit statements of aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. Notably, there is a good balance of general higher education matters specific to Ecclesiastical institutions discussed and very concrete advice given, helping to translate wider goals of quality assurance being quality enhancement into practical applicable cases.

AVEPRO guidance to universities and faculties reminds of their overall mission, to quote from the letter to all European institutions: "The quality of the training offered to those attending your institutions is certainly of vital importance, especially if backed by good research, "since the destiny of society and of the Church itself is intimately linked with the progress of your people pursuing higher studies" (*Gravissimum educationis* 10). You are preparing those who will transmit the Christian revelation, and the old and new findings derived from the inexhaustible treasure of its wisdom, to a world deeply in need of it".

This is complemented by very specific guidance on operational level, e.g., as explained in the introduction to questionnaires, posted on AVEPRO website, “A bipolar balanced 4 point scale of satisfaction has been used in most cases, to ensure that a relatively clear position is expressed and a high level of responses are given, thus facilitating the processing of responses. The faculties are invited to add to the questionnaires where appropriate, according to their specific characteristics”.

It is clear to the Panel that AVEPRO is putting big efforts in creating, publishing, and disseminating the documentation encompassing general principles, aims and objectives of quality assurance processes as well as particular tools helping to assess the quality of staff, teaching, services, and educational experiences both during the course and upon completion of it.

c) CONCLUSION  
**Full compliance.**

d) COMMENDATION

The review panel highlights AVEPRO efforts in promoting the internal and external assessment principles and processes among the academic community it serves. AVEPRO is a young agency and has shown tremendous achievement in a short time, its ability to function rather successfully in the non-homogenous QA environment is commendable.

**4.1.3. ESG 2.3 - Criteria for decisions**

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

a) EVIDENCE

As is clearly mentioned in the AVEPRO self-evaluation report, the objective of the overall QA procedures is not related to any form of accreditation, and, thus, does not lead to formal decisions. The approach is based in an enhancement oriented method, as can be perceived from the guidelines and documents of the external evaluation procedure.

As already referred to, the Agency also has set out its way in the *Letter to All European institutions* (of 22 February 2010), *Briefing Note for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. The Nature, Context and Purpose of Quality Assurance*, as well as in the handbook called “Quality Culture, a Handbook for Ecclesiastical Faculties”. The reports published by AVEPRO visibly show this approach to the external evaluation exercise.

The review team met a wide range of stakeholders; representatives of institutions at senior leadership level, heads of faculties, lecturers, and students. The Panel was pleasantly surprised, at the extent to which the institution representatives expressed their support for the work of the Agency, recognised the fairness of the AVEPRO’s approach and accepted that any negative reports and recommendations could only be made based on deficiencies in their own work and institutions.

## b) ANALYSIS

There are no formal decisions made by AVEPRO; neither positive nor negative judgments issued, nor accreditation periods given. Strictly speaking, ESG Standard 2.3 does not apply in this instance. The lack of formal decision is because AVEPRO acts as an Agency for the Congregation of Catholic Education, which is the final decision making authority in relation to the Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (as an organisation it corresponds to “the Ministry” in the case of other national agencies).

The reports of the reviews carried out by, and for, the Agency are published. They are also sent to and are available to the CCE. The reports are also sent to the Higher Education Institutions under review.

It may be illustrative to discuss the extent to which the Agency operates on the basis of “explicitly published criteria” and the consistency of application of these criteria. The review Panel examined the three basic documents to which AVEPRO refers in SER (*Sapientia Christiana*, ESG, and Guidelines of Good Practice of INQAAHE). It was discovered that they are clear, explicit and consistent one with another. The Agency’s documents, and in particular the *Quality Handbook*, were examined and set out criteria and processes which were found to be fully consistent with the basic documents and with good custom and practice in European quality assurance circles.

## c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

### 4.1.4. ESG 2.4 - Process fit for purpose

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

Evidence in respect to this ESG standard is abundant, extensive passage in the SER going together with other written sources, and complemented by oral confirmations by stakeholders met, including experts themselves who served on AVEPRO teams.

The review team spent considerable time in site visit discussions examining aspects of the Agency’s practice relating to this ESG requirement and expectations. The group was conscious on the one hand of the relatively short period in which the Agency has operated, and on the other of the very long period of time in which many of the Ecclesiastical institutions and, indeed, the Congregation for Catholic Education itself have been involved in the development and operation of Universities and Faculties and of ensuring the quality of their provision.

As stated in the SER, external review experts are appointed for a five-year term by the President of the Agency, after consultation with the CCE, based on their scientific competence as well as academic experience. On the one hand, AVEPRO seeks CVs from potential candidates to experts. On the other hand, self-nominations are also accepted. Expert profiles are carefully evaluated, taking special attention to the person’s expertise in quality assurance, managerial skills, knowledge of languages, fields of specialisation. In any case, experts must be

confirmed by the President (and this is the internal Agency's protocol) prior to going on site visits.

The Panel requested and received additional clarification on the expert database, consisting of 257 names of experts, of which 141 have been already appointed by the Agency (as of June 2013). It is expected, that within the given five-year appointment period, experts would be called to serve two or three times.

The Panel noted the involvement of students in all review panels from September 2012. They further noted the student interest was most frequently represented by postgraduate or doctoral students. Student representation on AVEPRO's Board of Directors and Scientific Council predates membership of review panels.

A significant number of faculty staff and students in the institutions under the purview of AVEPRO are of multi nation origin. It is only appropriate, that all review teams have international experts among their number.

The Agency developed an expert training strategy based on three main instruments – (1) *ad hoc* seminars, (2) notes of guidance for external evaluators, (3) e-Learning training programme. The three are used as appropriate for the specific planned reviews.

Online training materials for members of expert groups were presented to the Panel, and the group also had an opportunity to speak with one expert commissioned specifically for the development of this learning tool. It consists of 7 modules, structured around such questions as what must be done, how it must be done, what should be defined, and what difficulties may be encountered. Each module can be used in three different ways: as notes and slides, as video, as podcast. User-friendliness and suitability for the task were among the guiding principles in creating this course and were indeed commended by experts who used it as such.

The Agency pays due attention to the procedure to provide sufficient evidence in support of the findings. For that purpose, it is consistent with ESG part II both on the level of principles and activities. The institutional self-assessment is the starting point, then the expert panel is assembled, the site visit is conducted after the initial scrutiny of documentation by the appropriate University or Faculty, resulting in the publishing of the review report and follow activities in the form of dialogue between the Agency and the HEI. Follow-up involves institutional reports (incorporating quality improvement plans – QIPs), face-to-face meetings, also seminars.

## b) ANALYSIS

The Panel is informed by the SER document, that AVEPRO procedures are designed with quality enhancement purpose to be applicable to the variety of institutions that are guided by their founding values (including as defined by their strategic aims and missions) and reflecting diversity of countries, cultures, and charisma of the staff. The Agency's approach is inspired by ESG, and the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*; consideration is given to the Statutes of the Universities and Faculties themselves. Fitness for purpose is indeed the main working definition of the quality in higher education applied by AVEPRO.

From the printed list of the expert database and as informed by the examination of the reports by teams from reviews conducted by AVEPRO, the Panel noted the capacity and experience of the members of review teams which usually comprise former University Rectors, former ministers and experts active in international organisations. Apparently, the members of panels were academics of very high competence and experience in the relevant subject areas and the panels themselves usually comprise experts from a number of countries. The Panel noted a certain lack of formality in the selection of review team members and the direct involvement of the Agency's President, himself a distinguished former rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University, in the nomination and appointment of experts. This, however, seems to be consistent with the governance system of the Holy See, and the selection of experts is done with appropriate care. Noteworthy, though CCE would be consulted regarding expert selection, its opinion is non-binding and the Agency bears the final responsibility for the expert appointment.

The age and academic profile of the student representatives attested to the commitment of the Holy See system to the promotion of lifelong learning. However, from the Panel's interaction with student members it appears that student representatives would benefit from a greater involvement in both kinds of QA if they are to reach beyond their individual academic and social needs to the level of meaningful student contribution to various aspects of institutional management and improvement and an ability to focus on more active participation in the learning process.

The creative approach exercised by the Agency towards the need to have proper expert briefing by combining several ways – seminars, the written guidance and an e-learning path – should be commended. The review Panel understands that double instruction was available to a team in the procedure implemented jointly by AVEPRO and another national quality agency in order to help navigate between the different requirements and expectations from the review. Seemingly, this model of training might be well suitable under other joint procedures as well. Clarity, specificity and user-friendliness are distinct features of the on-line training materials. This modular programme was found innovative and of particular relevance.

Having spoken with many, the Panel was of the view that however distinguished the members of the review teams were, additional efforts could be made to developing the training of experts and to ensuring that experts take part in and benefit from that training.

The review Panel ended its deliberations conscious of the truth of the remark in the guidelines to this standard: "It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes". It appeared that this sentence might merit the addition of "and those of its own government and of its national and international stakeholders". Throughout the review in documentation and site visit meetings it was clear that the Agency is committed to institutional improvement and enhancement policies; and was basing conclusions on evidence.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

e) COMMENDATION

We commend the Agency for developing the on-line training tool for experts allowing flexible use of the learning materials, according to the preference and needs of the person concerned. It also appears a very appropriate tool to address the expert training needs in a cost-efficient way.

f) RECOMMENDATION

The Panel welcomes the involvement of student members within the teams but encourages AVEPRO for greater effort to bring cohesion to the involvement of students in the processes of the Agency and in quality assurance matters on the ground within the Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties.

**4.1.5. ESG 2.5 – Reporting**

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

According to the article 13 of AVEPRO Statutes, it rests with the Agency to define modalities for the publication of the results of evaluations. AVEPRO has developed the *Form for external Evaluation*, the *SER External review format* (for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties). General values and benefits of publicity are also discussed in the *AVEPRO Briefing note* and the *General principles of external review*.

There are 15 external review reports easily available at AVEPRO website. They are produced in English or French. As explained in SER, since the Holy See has seven official languages, AVEPRO tends to accept final reports if written in one of them; nevertheless, the Agency requires English to be used whenever possible.

While there is some variation in the length of the reports they seem to cover the needs of the particular reviews. The drafting of the reports (i.e. those in English) is clear, concise and understandable. All reports follow the pattern of description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations.

The institutions being reviewed have the option of responding to the factual accuracy of the draft report within 15 days of receiving the document. If no response arrives, the report is considered finalised and published. In case the institution comments on factual errors, the report is amended accordingly and then published.

The Agency clearly knows the area of reporting needs improvement and puts efforts to that end. The review team noted that the Agency in the interviews described that they had launched a project in order to streamline even further the structure and layout of the reports.

## b) ANALYSIS

As is clear from the analysis of review reports published on AVEPRO website and the minutes of the Scientific Council, reporting requires further development and this need is being addressed by AVEPRO.

The Scientific Council repeatedly discussed the issue of language usage in order to reach target audiences. The Agency might further consider some of the methods developed by other European agencies to meet this problem.

The Scientific Council also frequently addressed the issue of proper structuring and the need for recommendations to be clearly identified; and the need to harmonise practices and the style of the reports (including the length of the text).

In response, AVEPRO developed relevant modules to train its experts and produced written guidelines. To date of the external review of the Agency, these recommendations await full implementation, but the Panel understood that AVEPRO is on the way to implement necessary improvements.

The different reports seem to provide the institutions and stakeholders with valuable information and insights. AVEPRO uses a *Form for external Evaluation* which all external panels are instructed to draw on – and to adapt to the type and size of the evaluated institution. The different reports of the Agency vary in length and degree of in-depth analysis. Thus, future reports can benefit from a more standardized introduction that can to a larger extent enable readers to understand the purposes and standards of the review. Although all reports support the recommendations with evidence, some of the reports could profit at clarifying this connection further.

The reports from the external reviews have a critical approach and are written in a style that reveals weak points and potential for perfection. The Agency can assess whether they were more likely to recommend the evaluators to a greater extent to give the evaluated institutions commendations of good practice.

The website could be updated more frequently than at present and minor inconsistencies in published reports should be remedied.

## c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

## d) COMMENDATION

The Panel commends AVEPRO for including in the external review reports institutional responses to review teams as promoting transparency and strengthening the stakeholder approach of external reviews as contributing towards quality enhancement.

## e) RECOMMENDATION

AVEPRO should reinforce requirements towards different review panels so that they fully follow the Agency's guidance in all aspects of external reviews, in particular

adhering to the single standard report form developed. The Agency may also be willing to learn from ENQA EQArep project on best practice in publishing reports and to adjust its performance accordingly.

#### 4.1.6. ESG 2.6 - Follow-up procedures

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

##### a) EVIDENCE

In the *Briefing note for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties on the nature, context and purpose of quality assurance*, the last component of AVEPRO methodology is identified as follows: "There is systematic follow-up by the unit with a view to implementing the recommendations. This is monitored by the unit and the DQA [Director for Quality Assurance]." It is expected that follow-up will be prompt and an action plan will be prepared and implemented.

In the *Time scale for the quality review of a unit* under three main stages (self-evaluation, peer review and site visit, follow-up), the last one is detailed within the time span of stops by one month. Namely, three months after the site visit, in consultation with the director of quality assurance, the unit shall prepare a quality improvement plan based on the recommendations for development contained in the peer review group report. The plan should include realistic, achievable, measurable and time-lined actions. Later, four months after the visit, the quality improvement plan should be approved by the quality committee and sent for endorsement to the appropriate high-level committee dealing with overall strategic planning. Responsibility for monitoring progress in the implementation of the actions contained in the plan rests on the quality committee. AVEPRO and other appropriate entities should receive a copy of the QIP.

The integral nature of all quality assurance activities is stressed in the *Quality Improvement Plan: Notes of guidance*. Very importantly, ownership and participation in quality assurance is emphasized, and this represents the belief, that the institution primarily is responsible for its work in the current day and in the future. To quote *Sapientia Christiana*: "Since the University or Faculty forms a sort of community, all the people in it, either as individuals or as members of councils, must feel, each according to his or her own status, co-responsible for the common good and must strive to work for the institution's goals".

The review Panel was informed that in some cases the Agency held seminars as part of follow-up activities and in support of institutional transformations related to the quality assurance procedures.

The review team noted through several interviews that QIP seemed to play a significant role in the review processes, and the interviews made it clear that the institutions were very concerned about following up the recommendations with actual action.

##### b) ANALYSIS

AVEPRO have in their procedures emphasized the importance of requiring institutions to develop Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) immediately after the report

has been delivered from the Panel. The Agency follows up all involved institutions in order to see that the recommendations are complemented with actual action. In the first round of review, this has been done extensively.

The Agency and its governing bodies monitor the implementation of the QIP. The QIP is expected to be integrated in the University or Faculty's strategic planning and budgeting.

In the interviews the Agency has underlined that in the future – with a greater amount of institutions under review – they must increasingly let the supervision of the individual institutions QIP be done in a more rigid systemized way. It is understood that the follow-up procedures were not systematically implemented yet given the present level of development.

AVEPRO has also to a great extent succeeded in sustaining a culture where work for improvements seems to be prevalent among the institutions. When the Agency has completed the first round of reviews, and has a full-scale pressure of work towards the institutions – they will have to enforce procedures that enable them to do so. Further work by AVEPRO in order to help and monitor with the implementation of the QIPs would be of great value for the institutions as this corresponds to principal stakeholder expectations of what an external quality assurance agency can do for the benefit of higher education institutions.

#### c) CONCLUSION

##### **Substantial compliance.**

#### **4.1.7. ESG 2.7 - Periodic reviews**

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

#### a) EVIDENCE

The Agency operates clearly defined review procedures and gives guidance on the AVEPRO website to universities, faculties and experts regarding the operation of the institutional review process.

The Agency aims to function at a five year evaluation cycle. At the time of the site visit, the Agency had completed the review of 10% of the institutions to be assessed. The analysis on possibility and necessity of regional branches of AVEPRO was made already in 2010. The initial suggestion includes a scheme on founding six components along geographical and linguistic lines as follows:

- South Europe, comprising Italy, Malta, Italian-speaking Switzerland;
- Centre Europe, comprising Germany, Austria, German-speaking Switzerland;
- East Europe, comprising Poland, Lithuania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia;
- Mediterranean Europe, comprising Spain and Portugal;
- Francophone Europe, comprising France and French-speaking Belgium and Switzerland;
- Northwest Europe, comprising Ireland, Holland and Dutch-speaking Belgium.

In the analysis paper on relations between AVEPRO and AKAST (in IT, presented to the review Panel on request), it is underscored that it is vital for regional branches of the Agency to retain close relations with the Agency in Rome in order to avoid the creation of mini local agencies that develop evaluation systems and procedures regardless of AVEPRO.

As described above under other sections, the higher education system of the Holy See is large and diverse, there are various types of institutions. The extent to which the institutions depend on AVEPRO varies greatly. Thus, to fully cover all institutions – not only Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, but also connected institutions, the Agency laid an expectation, that internal assessment processes within them all will also have a regular nature: “The institution will conduct a review of each academic and service unit at regular intervals but in any case not less than once in every five years. For this purpose the institution’s quality committee will prepare a schedule of the units to be reviewed over the cycle” (*Time Scale for Quality Review*).

#### b) ANALYSIS

The review procedures are clearly defined and established in advance according to the evidences obtained by the review Panel. AVEPRO has developed and published in their website several documents regarding their external evaluation procedure.

When talking to institutional representatives, who are in charge of securing quality of connected institutions, the Panel understood, that robust procedures in relation to their quality are yet to be rigorously defined and effectively put into operation in all cases.

During the site visit the panel members were able to check that the Agency is in an early stage of completing the first round of evaluations and it would be challenging to cover 181 institutions located in 18 countries with 15 different languages. AVEPRO has given some consideration to the establishment of its regional branches and prerequisites for their successful functioning. While the resources available to AVEPRO both human and financial are short of what is required to implement the five yearly cycle, the Panel was assured by the Secretariat of State that additional resources would be made available in the coming months. The review Panel noted that the Agency is very aware of their need for additional resources and plans to take necessary steps to secure the cycle of review procedures is properly implemented.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

#### d) RECOMMENDATION

The team is hopeful that necessary preparations for the articulation of AVEPRO work and facilitation is under way to assure proper running of the external reviews for all higher education institutions that belong to the system of the Holy See. Respecting international commitments in the Bologna process, all types of higher education institutions, in their own right are expected to take due consideration and action to implement provisions of ESG part I.

#### 4.1.8. ESG 2.8 - System-wide analysis

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

##### a) EVIDENCE

AVEPRO has produced an analysis of the Holy See education system entitled "QA in Ecclesiastical Institutions in Europe". It provides an in-depth description of Universities and Faculties and their regulatory framework in 18 countries in Europe. The study is mainly based on questionnaires filled by institutions and scrutiny of information sources on the internet. It showed that quality culture was not homogenous from the point of view of countries or the type of a Faculty. In almost all countries Faculties emphasized the importance of not duplicating evaluation processes between national agencies and AVEPRO. At the same time the analysis made it apparent that cooperation between AVEPRO and national agencies would be very possible and welcome, moreover, that it should be shaped according to the local specifics. The document is freely available from the Agency's website.

As mentioned in the SER and presented to the Panel during the site visit, there are two other studies under development (during the time of the site visit) – an in-depth study on situation in doctoral studies and a country study covering Italy.

AVEPRO also provides on their website annual reports with detailed information about its activities and recent developments.

The handbook "Quality Culture" and a database on Ecclesiastical institutions represent work done in common with the Congregation for Catholic Education.

The Agency also expressed a belief, that over time, quality improvement plans would enable AVEPRO to gain an overview and build a database on key areas that affect the quality of all Ecclesiastical institutions.

##### b) ANALYSIS

During the interviews the review Panel has been able to confirm that there was already a system-wide analysis report produced by AVEPRO, which has been put available to the Panel members. Among other results, this analysis helped to identify institutional practices and future needs, also to schedule the Agency's activities and draw the Strategic Plan.

Moreover, the Panel has been able to confirm that there are forthcoming reports and plans to involve in their production not only Agency's staff, but also academic staff and students from some higher education institutions based in Rome.

On the basis of the evidence available, the Panel is satisfied that AVEPRO contributes to the wider discussion and development of higher education on a regular basis.

##### c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

#### 4.1.9. ESG 3.1 - Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

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

##### a) EVIDENCE

Guidelines under this ESG standard require the Agency taking into consideration best practice and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe for several decades, since early 1990s. The Review Panel was presented evidence, demonstrating meeting of the above mentioned expectations in documentation, of which in particular should be noted the *Letter to All European Institutions (dated Feb 22, 2010)* [further on – the Letter] and the *Briefing note for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties: The Nature, context and Purpose of Quality Assurance* (further on – Briefing note).

In the *Letter*, it is underscored the collaborative nature of work towards the quality – by internal and external stakeholders, yet also the subsidiarity principle, according to which “the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself” (quoted from ESG).

In the *General Principles on External Review*, AVEPRO starts from the reminder of quality assurance consisting of two strands – an internal (being the first) and an external (being the second). The Agency clearly commits to “operate an external review process consistent with Part 2 Standards outlined in ESG”, and to support higher education institutions in various ways.

In their document entitled *Internal Evaluation: Quality Assurance Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties*, AVEPRO states other sources, used by the Agency. These include guidance as prepared by the University College Dublin (i.e. “Guidelines for Self-Assessment, Review, Follow-up”), documentation by Irish Universities Quality Board’s (i.e. “A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities”), and European University Association’s Institutional Evaluation Programme.

The Agency also identifies as its aim to harmonise its work with local requirements that institutions are exposed to being placed among various cultures and legal traditions.

As the last part of the *Briefing note*, AVEPRO commits to properly take care of own quality assurance through internal feedback, internal reflection and external feedback, thus demonstrating applicability of the same quality management principles to it as the quality agency.

##### b) ANALYSIS

In the *Briefing note*, AVEPRO relates to the larger context of contemporary quality assurance, emphasising that quality and pursuit for excellence are imbedded in the tradition of higher education, which has long history of continuous development, adaptation and improvement. External quality assurance, thus, builds upon a variety of internal instruments. This view was also largely shared by institutional representatives and religious superiors with whom the review Panel met.

In the *Letter* mentioned above, it is demonstrated, that on the level of principles, broad consensus is shared and the same values embedded in various documentation – secular (primarily – ESG, as well as proceedings by AVEPRO), and ecclesiastical (i.e. “*Sapientia Christiana*”, supplemented by the norms of applications “*Ordinationes*”).

It is clear, that while deciding on their approach and developing concrete processes, AVEPRO took note of the general review methodology adopted by EUA and several higher education institutions, as well as of expectations laid down in ESG.

#### c) CONCLUSION

##### **Full compliance.**

#### **4.1.10. ESG 3.3 - Activities**

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

#### a) EVIDENCE

The Agency was founded on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. It set out to set up a methodological framework based on best practice in established quality assurance agencies and to undertake a number of review projects based on institutions in single countries.

By the *Statutes*, it is predefined that AVEPRO performs its service towards Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, that, erected or approved by the CCE, have power to award academic degrees under the authority of the Holy See. The Panel requested the Agency additional clarification as to the realm of responsibilities – direct and indirect.

It was explained, that AVEPRO bears direct responsibility of conducting reviews in 258 Faculties around the world. Yet, as the Agency started its activities in Europe, at the moment, exact number of institutions to be covered is 184 (from annex 3 of the SER).

To add, AVEPRO does not bear direct responsibility, but impacts on QA processes of the so called connected institutions (191 in Europe, total amount around the world – 393). In addition to evaluation of the Faculties, the Agency's attention will be devoted to how they follow and manage quality in these connected institutions. For that purpose, AVEPRO together with the Faculty of Theology of Palermo are developing a pilot project, geared at clarifying responsibility and roles of Ecclesiastical Faculties and their connected institutions.

To date, reviews have been carried out in Ecclesiastical faculties in France, Lithuania, Austria, Spain, and Italy. Institutions reviewed have provided feedback on the process and this has been used in redefining processes and methodology. The processes are based on a five yearly review cycle. However, AVEPRO leadership and staff are very conscious that the pace needs to be speeded up in order to cover all institutions for which AVEPRO is directly responsible.

Notably, AVEPRO *Statutes* allow a possibility of the Agency being articulated into more regional subcomponents with the aim to meet particular necessities or requests from various countries or geographical areas (art. 4.1), as mentioned earlier, further analysis of possibilities was also made.

#### b) ANALYSIS

It is clear that the Agency is conducting quality assurance activities mainly at institutional level on a regular basis. The Panel confirmed this through interviews with the Agency and institution staff, and by examining documentation at AVEPRO.

The Pilot Project enabled AVEPRO to refine processes and build upon existing internal quality assurance procedures.

It should be noted, that definition in which countries it may be of interest to carry reviews, is done by AVPRO in agreement with CCE, but still institutions voluntary subscribe to the assessment, based on mutual negotiations. Exception would be for programme reviews, the cycle of which is predetermined by the legislation of the country in which an institution is based and degrees of which are conferred (as this was the case of cooperation on programme reviews by AVEPRO and SKVC in Lithuania).

Both by the SER and during meetings, the Panel was informed of the Agency's assessment cycle being equal to five years. Yet, acceleration is needed to cover all higher education institutions which directly depend on AVEPRO.

Both the very senior and middle level management of higher education institutions with whom the Panel has met, acknowledged the need to better take care of quality of education provided by connected institutions. Thus, AVEPRO involvement is seen important in addressing this challenge.

While establishing regional branches of the Agency might be a lengthy process, posing various economic, legal and logistical challenges, for the moment being the strategy adopted by AVEPRO, as discussed with Board of Directors, is to engage in closer cooperation with renowned quality agencies around Europe.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

#### d) RECOMMENDATION

The Agency together with relevant units within the Holy See's administrative structures are encouraged to further take actions to secure appropriate staff and other resources enabling to fulfil AVEPRO duties on a five-yearly basis. AVEPRO could also engage in joint activities and benefit from mutual learning with other agencies members of ENQA.

#### **4.2. ENQA criterion 2 (ESG 3.2 Official status)**

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

AVEPRO was created by Pope Benedict XVI as an Institution connected to the Holy See, as provided by articles 186 and 190-191 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (1988). Moreover, AVEPRO's activities are in line with the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* (15 April 1979).

According to the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, AVEPRO falls within the category of entities "which do not belong to the Roman Curia in a strict sense but nevertheless provide useful or necessary services to the Supreme Pontiff himself, to the Curia and the whole Church, and are in some way connected with the Apostolic See" (art. 186).

It is set in the *Statutes* of AVEPRO, that the Agency aims at promoting quality of research and teaching, and evaluates attainment of adequate international standards on the part of the academic institutions of the Catholic Church. AVEPRO is endowed with public canonical juridical personality and Vatican civil juridical personality, and has its legal head office in the Vatican City State. The Agency is expected to operate both according to the canonical norms and international agreements party of which the Holy See is.

AVEPRO *Statutes* were published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (6 January 2009) and are available on their website.

From 2007, AVEPRO holds Affiliate status with ENQA and has an intention to obtain full membership in this association, upon demonstration of compliance to ESG. Both governing bodies – the Scientific Council and Board of Directors – have endorsed work of the Agency towards this priority, as seen from their meeting notes, and heard during the relevant meetings of the on-site visit.

#### b) ANALYSIS

The review Panel is satisfied that AVEPRO operates on a clear and established legal basis and is recognised by competent authorities in the Holy See. It is further evident from the documentation that AVEPRO complies with the requirements inherent in its legal framework.

When talking with representatives of the Secretariat of State and the Congregation for Catholic Education, it was obvious, that activities of AVEPRO are very much supported and appreciated as making important contribution towards achievement of goals set collectively for the higher education institutions of the Holy See and the Agency.

The Panel shares the view with AVEPRO governing bodies, that positive external review of AVEPRO will allow the Agency to gain further recognition and trust across EHEA, and effectively will ease the task of serving diverse higher education institutions, that are spread across 18 countries with 15 different languages.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

#### d) RECOMMENDATION

Given the global presence of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, and the possibility of articulation into the regional subcomponents, the Agency is encouraged to discuss, together with relevant administrative bodies of the Holy See, the necessary prerequisites for the greater international visibility and active involvement in ENQA.

#### 4.3. ENQA criterion 3 (ESG 3.4 Resources)

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

#### a) EVIDENCE

##### *Staffing*

The staffing complement consists of President, Director, Review Manager and Secretary. Staff members of the Agency are hired by the President of the Agency, with the approval of the Secretariat of State and of the APSA. The document entitled *Staff policy* is available from AVEPRO website and was also presented to the review Panel.

In addition to the core staff (four members), there is so called associate/adjunct staff, which are not full-time employees, but do contribute in important ways, e.g. acting as national contact points (on behalf of the Agency), also review coordinators (who manage visits and produce reports), expert advisers. The Agency has access to non-full time support from CCE and other bodies of the local Churches such as national Bishops' Conferences, the diplomatic service including incountry nunciature staff and organisations such as the International Federation of Catholic Universities.

The present staffing may be regarded as adequate for current activities. AVEPRO has applied for extra staffing, to enable further development and implementation of the assessment cycle on a 5-yearly basis. The Panel considers the application a modest one, but recognises that the application is consistent with general expectations in the Holy See.

##### *Financial resources*

As described in SER, the President, having consulted the Director, presents the budget plan to the APSA each year. The proposed plan should be accompanied by a brief report. Expenditures involved in the ordinary administration of the Agency concerning staff, secretariat management, as well as expenses for its premises, are taken care of by the APSA; the expenses incurred in external evaluation processes are, as a rule, borne by the Ecclesiastical Academic Institutions. Review expenses are in some cases covered by the appropriate national Bishops' Conference.

The review Panel notes that *Sapientia Christiana* (Article 56) states that a University or Faculty must have enough money to achieve its purposes. The same requirement would be expected of the Agency. AVEPRO is financed by and subject to the general human resource policies of the Holy See as set out by APSA (Budget

and Staff) and of the Secretariat of State which combines the Holy See's Foreign and Interior ministries.

The team met with the head of a unit of APSA and with a senior official of the Secretariat of State. The Panel also discussed resource questions with officials of AVEPRO, of the Congregation for Catholic Education and members of the agency's Board of Directors and Scientific Council.

There is an annual budgetary process similar to that which applies in most countries. The reliance on other agencies and facilities (in this case of the Holy See) is not common and is somewhat difficult for those not familiar with the system to follow. However unfamiliar it may be, it does achieve its aims.

### *Premises*

The Agency has a sufficient number of large and comfortable offices in a public building owned by the Holy See. These offices are sufficient for the needs of the present staffing establishment.

### b) ANALYSIS

The Agency is a relatively new body and has not yet completed a first round of reviews. There seems to be a general view among stakeholders that a considerable expansion of activity will be required in coming years. This expansion seems to be universally supported among stakeholders. The review Panel is constrained to distinguish between assessing the adequacy of resources for current activities and determining whether sufficient resources may be available in the future. The team was made aware of general constraints on funding in the Holy See which is similar to these applying at present in many European countries coupled with a delay in new appointments in the Holy See since early 2013 which arises from changes in the overall administration.

The Panel gave considerable thought to the evaluation of the evidence related to this standard and to an evaluation of the resourcing of AVEPRO in the particular circumstances and administrative practices of the Holy See. We conclude that the Agency has had adequate and proportional human and financial resources to meet current organisation and process needs. The initial pilot phase of review of institutions in large groups in Spain, Italy and France was possible on the level of resources available. Reviews in countries with a small number of institutions will be more resource intensive.

The serious reservations of the review Panel with regard to future staffing of the agency were alleviated considerably by the meeting in the Secretariat of State. The support at the senior level for the Agency and the assurance of goodwill towards the Agency's application for additional staffing when recruitment is opened up again in a few months' time was reassuring. While recognising the constraints on recruitment, which may be placed by internal transfers, the team felt that consideration should be given to recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced personnel.

The necessary increase in staff will have implications for premises. Additional accommodation will be required in due course.

The indirect subsidies of the Bishops' Conferences, the availability of external support in staffing and in kind from other agencies and institutions, and the payment of review costs by universities being reviewed served to reduce the direct budgetary needs of the Agency. It is the clear view of the review Panel that additional budgetary support will be required in the next few years.

c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

e) RECOMMENDATION

We conclude that the development of the review processes and procedures to meet the needs of the medium and long-term future will require additional financial resources and significantly increased staffing resources. We recommend that this matter receives the urgent concern of the appropriate offices in the Holy See.

**4.4. ENQA criterion 4 (ESG 3.5 Mission statement)**

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

a) EVIDENCE

The *Statutes* of AVEPRO, among other, cover such topics as its constitution, aim and location of the Agency; autonomy; quality of Ecclesiastical institutions; range and activities of the Agency. They specify, that AVEPRO aims at promoting the quality of research and teaching and evaluates the attainment of adequate international standards on the part of the academic institutions of the Catholic Church, as already desired by the Second Vatican Council.

In the *Mission statement* it says that respecting the Agency's independent nature, it collaborates with all actors interested in the life and progress of Ecclesiastical universities and faculties: the institutions themselves, the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Episcopal Conferences, all regional, national and international authorities, and all those who work in the various dioceses of countries in which Ecclesiastical academic institutions are based.

The interviews confirmed the impression given in the documents listed above. The interviews did not reveal any issues that could make problematic the content of these documents.

The Agency, in consultation with the BoD and Scientific Council prepares the strategic plan and annual work plans. The first strategic plan was of medium term, covering three years of operations. The current strategic plan (2013-2014) contains the goals and activities under the following categories:

- The Agency's Organization and Governance;
- Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in
- Ecclesiastical faculties;
- Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance, acting above all on the identification, selection and training of experts;

- Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis;
- Communication and Institutional relations.

It has a list of goals with subsequent action items (at least one, maximum seven) and deadlines by quarter.

#### b) ANALYSIS

It is clear that the Agency has an explicit *Mission statement*. Documentation visibly sets the complex landscape and shared responsibilities for quality in higher education of the Holy See. The *Mission Statement* is published on AVEPRO's web site and the main themes of it are repeated in a number of documents (including *General principles on External Review, Briefing note, Internal evaluation Quality Assurance guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties* etc.). All pertinent documentation is easily accessible to the public.

From available planning documents the review Panel is able confirm the *Mission Statement* is translated into a clear policy and action.

#### c) CONCLUSION **Full compliance.**

#### 4.5. ENQA criterion 5 (ESG 3.6 Independence)

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

#### a) EVIDENCE

Multiple documentation speaks of division of responsibilities between the various institutions of the Holy See (academic and administrative) and inside them, including these prepared prior to the Agency being established (such as circular letters of CCE, SapChr). It attests to the approach of concerted efforts in assuring quality and developing appropriate institutional cultures. Not undermining the need for joint action, but on the contrary, underscoring it, the Agency is established as an autonomous body by article 1 of the *Statutes*.

Further, the article 2.1 of *Statutes* of AVEPRO reads: "While complying with current canonical norms and international agreements in matters of higher education which the Holy See is part of, the Agency is fully autonomous in the development of the activities planned in the present Statute. To such aim, it develops, updates and puts into effect adequate measures and courses of action for the attainment of institutional goals".

Both the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council are appointed by the Pope for a five-year term, renewable once. In the governing bodies of AVEPRO, delegates of the Congregation for Catholic Education, educational institutions, students are present, but none of all stakeholders has a superseding voice. Decisions within the Board of Directors are reached by majority of members approving. A delegate from the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State takes part in work of the Scientific Council as an observer.

As to selection of experts, it is also covered under article 5 of the *Statutes*, namely, that it is responsibility of the Agency to choose and prepare experts for site visits. The review Panel sought an additional explanation on the details of this procedure. As referred earlier in the present report, the Congregation for Catholic Education expresses the non-binding opinion regarding candidates to experts. The Scientific Council can also advice on the choice of experts. However, the team is assured it is the President of the Agency who confirms their status as experts in the database, and also decides to appoint (or not) the expert in question.

#### b) ANALYSIS

AVEPRO is formally – and in reality – an independent unit within the Holy See. There is documentation, which guarantees operational independence of AVEPRO. The review team examined carefully relevant documents, and were convinced that the establishing of the Agency was done with careful consideration in order to ensure that the Agency enjoys a good level of independence.

Notably, the Pope at the State Secretariat (not the Congregation for Catholic Education) appoints the members of the governing bodies. Student representatives are included in both the BoD and Scientific Council.

The review team spent considerable time in site visit meetings examining aspects of the agency practice relating to this standard. In nearly all the various groups interviewed the review Panel tried to detect possible areas that could generate conflicts of interest. The interviews revealed a very consistent picture; the Agency is fully independent from higher education institutions, the Congregation for Catholic Education (Ministry), the State Secretariat or other stakeholders. These different entities did all underline this fact.

The review team has not uncovered situations that may have affected the Agency's independence. AVEPRO has autonomous responsibility for their operations and the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports are not influenced by third parties.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

#### **4.6. ENQA criterion 6 (ESG 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies)**

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

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

#### a) EVIDENCE

Currently AVEPRO website is available in four European languages with a fifth being developed. In its website there are publicly available: documentation relating to the external evaluations that AVEPRO carries out and guidance for conducting internal quality assurance at universities and faculties.

The team has been able to confirm that the external reviews are conducted by an external group of experts, which includes a student representative; this review relies on institutional self assessment, and is done through a site visit to the institution under evaluation.

The review Panel was informed by AVEPRO, that after the institution elaborated their own self evaluation report, there is an optional step, when prior to the Agency assembling the expert panel, the institution can invite a peer review group. It is with the aim to discuss the main findings emerging from SER and to prepare for the site visit by external experts.

The reports are made publicly available at the AVEPRO's website. To the Agency's review date, there were 15 reports easily available at AVEPRO's website. The reports contain the relevant information about the assessment, main findings and recommendations for improvement.

There is a follow up procedure that is done internally by the QA unit of the institution, not directly by AVEPRO, but informing it and engaging in mutual discussion. As stipulated in the *General Principles of External Review*, QA unit of the evaluated institution submits a follow-up Report to AVEPRO 12 months after the review. There were cases in France of subsequently holding follow-up seminars.

#### b) ANALYSIS

Due to the very specific nature of AVEPRO and its enhancement-oriented approach, it does not make formal decisions, but rather acts supporting the institutions in developing sound internal QA systems and assisting them in their self-development by the external reviews and their outcomes reflected in the reports.

The process of external evaluations comprise of a self-assessment by the institution against their own mission and aims, an external review conducted by external independent experts (including a student), who produce a report, which is made publicly available at AVEPRO's website. The follow-up procedure is predetermined and puts accent on internal work, but also has a public accountability element as well. Thus, the Agency is effectively following what now appears as an established European approach towards external quality assurance in higher education.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

#### **4.7. ENQA criterion 7 (ESG 3.8 Accountability procedures)**

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.
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a) EVIDENCE

In the *Statutes* of AVEPRO, administrative and managerial matters are covered under structure and staff; relevant articles describe appointment and functions of the President; Board of Directors; Scientific Committee; the Director and staff of the Agency; experts. They also speak about accountancy, budget and management; reports, and periodical records. Following the provisions of Article 13.3, the Agency is expected to present a summary of its activities to the Secretariat of State (Section for Relations with States) and the Congregation for Catholic Education by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March every year.

On the website, AVEPRO publishes reports of all past years from 2007 on (the first report covers the first 13 months of functioning, other reports are by single year). They provide summaries of yearly activities by month including concrete dates and names and some details of the work done.

Further, Article 13.4 of the Statutes envisages that, as planned by registers and international associations which it belongs to, every five years AVEPRO should carry out a self-evaluation under the supervision of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

It is specified, that the Board of Directors, chaired by President, approves the main orientations and supervises activities of the Agency, of which it checks the results. As a rule, BoD meets twice a year; their meeting minutes are available from the website.

The Scientific Council is also chaired by the President of the Agency and has a larger mandate to help in all activities of AVEPRO. In the *Statutes*, advisory function is geared towards, but not limited to matters of methodologies, external evaluations, expert training. As visible from the minutes, the Scientific Council has a custom to meet twice a year or so.

*Staff Policy* of AVEPRO is available from the website. The document lists (per position) requirements and expectations both to the knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as experience of the employees, and responsibilities to be carried out.

*General principles on external review, Briefing notes for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties* and all other documentation related to the external evaluations performed by AVEPRO reflect its mission and goals.

Attention to no-conflict of interests is managed via expert selection criteria and executed via declarations to be signed by members of AVEPRO evaluation Commissions (i.e. *Independence Form, Independence and Disclosure Form for Members of AVEPRO Evaluation Commission*). Universities and Faculties under review also have an obligation to report any potential conflict of interests, bias or undue influence regarding candidates for panels (evidence given in Annex to AVEPRO's SER under a point 2 „Specific measures“).

AVEPRO has a reliable mechanism in place to ensure the quality of its work, having a staff member dedicated to overseeing the quality of reports produced. It is also done by promoting changes that might be needed in guidelines and supportive

documents in order to ensure the quality of its activities – after discussions within the Scientific Council and the Board of Directors.

AVEPRO has in place internal and external feedback mechanisms. Internal feedback is obtained informally from staff and from members of the Scientific Council and BoD in various ways, including special questionnaires. External feedback is obtained from review experts and evaluated institutions, as well as from those undergoing evaluation process at whatever stage (self-evaluation, external evaluation, etc.).

#### b) ANALYSIS

The Panel is aware of the importance assigned to this review of AVEPRO as it coincides with the first cycle of the Agency's functioning. In Article 15 of the *Statutes* it is provided that they are effective for the coming five years ("is approved *ad quinquennium*"). It might be inferred from the latter provision that subsequent changes, not least in relation to the present review, might be expected. The Agency is encouraged to engage in internal and external discussions with key stakeholders and take appropriate improvement oriented measures.

AVEPRO has a policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, dedicating appropriate human resources and efforts. This quality assurance mechanism together with the internal and external feedback systems are effective.

Minutes of the BoD and Scientific Council meetings that were made available to the Panel show, that both advisory bodies cover very similar sets of questions in their agenda. Meetings tend to be limited to two per year, but lasting full working day.

There is a code for avoiding conflict of interest and the process is being managed without complaints from higher education institutions or experts as team members. However, the review Panel came across some cases from several years ago when members of the governing bodies of the Agency have participated as review panel members. Acting in their capacity, they did not receive financial benefit from the work. Notably, neither the President of AVEPRO nor BoD or Scientific Council issue binding accreditation decisions. Therefore, such active involvement in reviews is not regarded as compromising the integrity of the process, however, the Agency is strongly advised to avoid such instances in the future.

The team understands current structure of yearly AVEPRO reports answers internal accountability needs. For public accountability the Agency is encouraged to provide yearly reports that would have less detail, but be more synthetic and analytic in nature.

It is firmly set that AVEPRO will be subject to an external review on a quinquennial basis following this, the first review of its activities.

#### c) CONCLUSION

**Substantial compliance.**

#### e) RECOMMENDATION

When talking to esteemed members of the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council, the Panel saw their dedication to serve the Agency and also willingness to

contribute to reconsideration of the current arrangements of these two advisory bodies to more energetically support the Agency's work, at the same time permitting some saving of resources.

#### 4.8. ENQA criterion 8 (Consistency of judgements, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims)

- The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups.
- If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency.
- The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

##### a) EVIDENCE

###### *Professionalism*

The representatives of the Holy See Secretariat of State and the Congregation for Catholic Education expressed full support to activities of the Agency and understanding of the need to hire additional staff members and receive larger budget allocations in order to be able to better cope with responsibilities assigned.

Some AVEPRO staff members have worked at the Agency since the time of its establishment (e.g. President, Agency's Secretary), the current Director of AVEPRO is also working there for several years; turnover of the staff is little.

In the meeting with AVEPRO staff, testimonies were given regarding the in-house training for them as employees of the Holy See institutional system. In this respect, AVEPRO clearly benefits from the fact of belonging to the family of the Holy See organizations.

Participation in external quality content-related activities, such ENQA events and other international gatherings, devoted to quality assurance topics (e.g. INQAAHE, European Quality Forum, specialised seminars by various educational organizations), also is mentioned in the SER, and is meant as contributing towards professionalism of employees.

To carry their tasks appropriately, AVEPRO has developed a whole set of documentation, and ran a pilot phase of activities. This clearly demonstrates the Agency cares about the quality of its own processes. Further, the Agency understands the importance of proper arrangements when dealing with institutions, e.g. significance of a coordinator in supporting experts during the site visit. One can see in the minutes of AVEPRO's Board of Directors, that the same approach is largely shared by the BoD, which in their own turn reflect upon procedures: "it has become clear that the presence of a national coordinator facilitates the realisation of visits".

## *Consistency*

There are several ways in which the Agency addresses the need for it to function in a reliable way. First of all, consistency by AVEPRO is achieved via standardisation of review procedures. It is both on part of review teams – they are encouraged to follow a standard review visit agenda and use the same report template (evidence is available in “*E-learning Training Programme*”). The same applies to Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties – AVEPRO has produced relevant documentation to that effect as well (evidence document: “*Preparing the Self-Evaluation Report. Notes of Guidance for Faculties and Service Units*”).

The question of uniformity of review reports was addressed by the Scientific Council and Board of Directors not once. In response, the Agency took appropriate steps – on-line training course for experts was developed; written guidelines regarding production of review reports both to institutions and experts created (evidence source: “*E-learning Training Programme. General introduction, Module 6 the External Evaluation Report*”).

Then, consistency in judgments by different experts groups is meant to be achieved by expert training activities, *ad hoc* seminars already carried out to that effect in Italy and France. The Agency would report back to its governing bodies on those various measures applied; summary of AVEPRO’s activities is presented to the BoD.

## *Appeals system*

There are no formal decisions issued by AVEPRO, thus, in a strict sense, appealing is not an issue for the Agency. Yet, to produce good review reports and worthwhile recommendations, there is a way to moderate conclusions: a higher education institution has a possibility to respond to the review report within 15 days.

The issue of the need to have some sort of appeals system was repetitively discussed in AVEPRO advisory bodies – both the Scientific Council and BoD. To date, from the number of reviews held, no appeal was submitted. However, when reading review reports published on AVEPRO website, one can frequently find institutional responses in relation to observations (given in the main text of the reports) attached at the very end of the reports.

## *Contribution to ENQA*

AVEPRO became affiliate to ENQA in December 2007, almost immediately after the Agency’s founding. Already during the 1st meeting of the Scientific Council in September 2010, joining ENQA was set as a strategic priority, beneficial “to gain respect and credibility at an international level”. To that end, in the self-analysis report the Agency mentions consultative meetings were held with ENQA representatives in 2010.

The same importance to membership in ENQA was assigned by AVEPRO Board of Directors – “ENQA full membership will be a crucial point for AVEPRO development”, since ENQA as “network performs services that are not “market driven” (evidence in Minutes of the BoD meetings).

Conversely, not yet being a full member of ENQA is identified as a weakness of AVEPRO in their SWOT. Further in this analysis, alignment of agency’s QA processes

with those of ENQA and EUA is seen as helping the agency to “become an important partner and the drive to create a quality culture in HEIs across Europe”.

Preparation to membership in ENQA is part of the Strategic Plan for 2013-2014. During the Panel visit, both in meetings with AVEPRO staff and its advisory bodies, active membership in ENQA was uniformly identified as an immediate priority.

## b) ANALYSIS

### *Professionalism*

The Panel members were convinced during the visit to AVEPRO, that the Agency's staff is truly dedicated to their mission and well aware of the Agency's functioning context. They are genuinely concerned not only about the work they do and immediate results of it, but also about the further impact of it on the educational systems (which, as a matter not belonging to exact sciences is both hard to identify and to assess).

There is support from the Holy See institutions to AVEPRO staff in the form of trainings. Employees also participate in external activities and conferences organised by international organisations, which nowadays is not a luxury, but a standard expectation in the field and a professional necessity.

### *Consistency*

The experts participating in external evaluations are trained, and they have an online tool for individually developing their knowledge and skills for successful performance of the tasks.

A standardised review procedure contributes to the consistency of judgements issued at the end. The review reports are also overseen by AVEPRO staff and the Agency's governing bodies, which attests to the care for quality and to understanding of the value of publicity. AVEPRO is encouraged to further enforce all expert groups use the review report template available.

### *Appeals system*

There is a passing mentioning of an appeal process in SER, but no record as of today. Since AVEPRO does not take any formal decisions, a process of moderating review reports currently is seen as adequate for the purposes of the Agency.

### *Contribution to ENQA*

In the mission statement, the two most important sources regulating activities for AVEPRO are listed as follows: the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* and European Standards and Guidelines, afterwards other international agreements concerning rules and procedures for the evaluation of quality in higher education are mentioned (and this is understandable as this reflects the global education system of the Holy See and the potential reach of AVEPRO).

AVEPRO is working hard and is expected to enjoy international recognition through its positive external evaluation, and cherish trust in order to be able to develop further partnerships and contribute more actively to ENQA aims and activities.

c) CONCLUSION

**Full compliance.**

## 5. Conclusion and development

The Panel in review of AVEPRO found:

- **ENQA criterion 1a** / ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes  
**Substantial compliance**
  - ESG 2.1: Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures  
*substantial compliance*
  - ESG 2.2: Development of External Quality Assurance Processes  
*full compliance*
  - ESG 2.3: Criteria for Decisions  
*full compliance*
  - ESG 2.4: Processes Fit for Purpose  
*substantial compliance*
  - ESG 2.5: Reporting  
*substantial compliance*
  - ESG 2.6: Follow-Up Procedures  
*substantial compliance*
  - ESG 2.7: Periodic Reviews  
*substantial compliance*
  - ESG 2.8: System-Wide Analysis  
*full compliance*
- **ENQA criterion 1b** / ESG 3.1, 3.3 Activities - **Full compliance**
  - ESG Part 3.1:  
*Full compliance*
  - ESG Part 3.3:  
*Full compliance*
- **ENQA criterion 2** / ESG 3.2: Official status  
**full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 3** / ESG 3.4: Resources  
**substantial compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 4** / ESG 3.5: Mission statement  
**full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 5** / ESG 3.6: Independence  
**full compliance**
- **ENQA Criterion 6** / ESG 3.7: External QA criteria and processes used by the agency  
**full compliance**
- **ENQA Criterion 7** / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures  
**substantial compliance**
- **ENQA Criterion 8** / Miscellaneous  
**full compliance**

The review Panel is satisfied with the fast development and consolidation of the Agency and its activities, as well as with the professionalism and commitment demonstrated by AVEPRO's management, staff and stakeholders. At the same time, the review Panel encourages to take further appropriate actions to consider and implement recommendations provided.

- **ESG 2.1 – Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures**

AVEPRO should revisit its review methodology to more fully encompass expectations for internal quality assurance arrangements within all types of higher education institutions as laid down in ESG part I.

- **ESG 2.4 – Processes Fit for Purpose**

The Panel welcomes the participation of student members within the teams but encourages AVEPRO for greater effort to bring cohesion to the involvement of students in the processes of the Agency and in quality assurance matters on the ground within the Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties.

- **ESG 2.5 – Reporting**

AVEPRO should reinforce requirements towards different review panels so that they fully follow the Agency's guidance in all aspects of external reviews, in particular adhering to the single standard report form developed. The Agency may also be willing to learn from ENQA EQArep project on best practice in publishing reports and to adjust its performance accordingly.

- **ESG 2.7 – Periodic Reviews**

The team is hopeful that necessary preparations for the articulation of AVEPRO work and facilitation is under way to assure proper running of the external reviews for all higher education institutions that belong to the system of the Holy See. Respecting international commitments in the Bologna process, all types of higher education institutions, in their own right are expected to take due consideration and action to implement provisions of ESG part I.

- **ESG 3.2 – Official status**

Given the global presence of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, and the possibility of articulation into the regional subcomponents, the Agency is encouraged to discuss, together with relevant administrative bodies in the Holy See's structures, the necessary prerequisites for the greater international visibility and active involvement in ENQA.

- **ESG 3.3 – Activities**

The Agency together with relevant units within the Holy See's administrative structures are encouraged to further take actions to secure appropriate staff and other resources enabling to fulfil AVEPRO duties on a five-yearly basis. AVEPRO could also engage in joint activities and benefit from mutual learning with other agencies members of ENQA.

- **ESG 3.4 – Resources**

The team concludes that the development of the review processes and procedures to meet the needs of the medium and long-term future will require additional

financial resources and significantly increased staffing resources. We recommend this matter receives the urgent concern of the appropriate offices in the Holy See.

- **ESG 3.8 – Accountability procedures**

When talking to esteemed members of the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council, the Panel saw their dedication to serve the Agency and also willingness to contribute to reconsideration of the current arrangements of these two advisory bodies to more energetically support the Agency's work, at the same time permitting some saving of resources.

## **External review of the Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO)**

### **Annex I: Terms of Reference**

June 2013  
Amended November 2013

#### **1. Background and Context**

The Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO), established by the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI on 19 September 2007, is an institution connected to the Holy See, as provided by articles 186 and 190-191 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*. The Agency's duty is to promote and develop a culture of quality within the academic institutions that depend directly on the Holy See and ensure they possess internationally valid quality criteria.

AVEPRO's activities are regulated by the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* (15 April 1979).

The Agency collaborates with academic institutions in defining internal procedures to evaluate the quality of teaching, research and services, which is done through the development and use of appropriate operational tools. AVEPRO also organises external evaluation procedures for individual academic institutions and arranges visits to them by experts.

The Agency collaborates with all actors interested in the life and progress of ecclesiastical universities and faculties: the institutions themselves, the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Episcopal Conferences, all regional, national and international authorities, and all those who work in the various dioceses of countries in which ecclesiastical academic institutions are based.

AVEPRO has been Affiliate of ENQA since 2007. The Agency is applying for the first time for Full membership of ENQA.

#### **2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent AVEPRO fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AVEPRO should be granted Full Member of ENQA. The review Panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards the granting of Full Membership.

### **3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review Panel;
- Self-evaluation by AVEPRO including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review Panel to AVEPRO;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review Panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the Panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

#### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review Panel consists of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. One of the Panel members serves as the chair of the review.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide the Congregation for Catholic Education with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae for the consideration of AVEPRO regarding conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the AVEPRO review.

#### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

The proposal of schedule for the site visit will be drafted by AVEPRO and the Panel. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review Panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2 days.

The review Panel will be assisted by AVEPRO in arriving in the Vatican City.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review Panel and AVEPRO.

#### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review Panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review Panel. The report will take into account the purpose

and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. The review secretary will submit a draft for comment to AVEPRO within five months of the site visit for comments on factual accuracy. If AVEPRO chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review Panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review Panel will take into account the statement by AVEPRO, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA, who will forward it to the Congregation for Catholic Education.

The report is to be finalised within six months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

#### **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

AVEPRO will consider the expert Panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the AVEPRO website.

The final review report will be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the Board.

#### **5. Use of the report**

The Congregation shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in The Congregation.

The review report is to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether AVEPRO has or has not met the membership criteria/ESG.

AVEPRO and the Congregation for Catholic Education shall be aware that, should an application to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) be submitted, the Chair of the panel might be approached by the Register Committee for any request for clarification. The Chair of the panel may give a response but he/she is requested to copy the Director of ENQA on all correspondence.

#### **6. Division of tasks and responsibilities**

- 6.1 ENQA tasks and responsibilities will be performed in accordance with the provisions of the contract and the present Terms of Reference, and will include:
- a) Acting as liaison between the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Panel during the review process;
  - b) Setting up and approving of the Panel;
  - c) Submitting the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to the Congregation for Catholic Education;
  - d) Contacting the members of the Panel and drafting their contract;

- e) Circulating to the Panel the Self-Evaluation report;
- f) Arranging a telephone briefing with the Panel before the site visit;
- g) Submitting the final report received from the Panel Secretary to the Congregation for Catholic Education.

6.2 The Congregation for Catholic Education tasks and responsibilities will be performed in accordance with the provisions of the contract and the present Terms of Reference, and will include:

- a) Acting as liaison between AVEPRO and ENQA during the review process;
- b) Submitting the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to AVEPRO for their consideration regarding conflicts of interest;
- c) Setting the dates of the visit with AVEPRO and the Panel;
- d) Submitting the final report of the Panel to AVEPRO;
- e) Liaising with the Panel members for the reimbursement of their travel and subsistence expenses.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 8 months, from June 2013 to February 2014:

Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	June 2013
Appointment of review Panel members	June 2013
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	June 2013
Self-evaluation report submitted to ENQA	10 June 2013
Briefing of review Panel members	June 2013
Review Panel site visit	8-9 July 2013
Draft of evaluation report to AVEPRO	By 31 December 2013
Statement of AVEPRO to review Panel if necessary	Early January 2014
Submission of final report to ENQA	By 13 January 2014
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of AVEPRO	February 2014
Publication of report and implementation plan	February 2014

## Annex II: List of supporting documents

### Documents provided by AVEPRO

1. [AVEPRO Self-Evaluation Report 2013](#). Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties.
2. [Acta apostolica sedis – 6 January 2009 \(cfr page 12\)](#)
3. [Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus \(1988\)](#)
4. [Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana of Pope John Paul II on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties \(1979\) and Special norms – Ordinations](#)
5. [AVEPRO Briefing note](#)
6. [AVEPRO Letter to all European Institutions](#)
7. Budget 2011 (available only in hard copy)
8. Budget 2012 (available only in hard copy)
9. Budget 2013 (available only in hard copy)
10. Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) Circular letters ([Circular letter n° 3](#), [Circular letter n° 5](#), [Circular letter n° 7](#))
11. [E-learning training course](#)
12. [Form for external evaluation](#)
13. [General principles on external review](#)
14. [Guidelines for peer review and site visit](#)
15. INDEX, Editio 2005, Universitates et alia Instituta Studiorum Superiorum Ecclesiae Catholicae – Congregation for Catholic Education (2005) [IT] - (available only in hard copy)
16. [Internal evaluation Quality Assurance Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties](#)
17. [Minutes of the Board of Directors](#)
18. [Minutes of the Scientific Council](#)
19. [Mission statement](#)
20. Osservazioni in Merito a Statuti, Strumenti, Procedure e Rapporti di Valutazione di AVEPRO e AKAST (IT)
21. [QA in Ecclesiastical Institution in Europe](#)
22. Quality Culture, a Handbook for Ecclesiastical Faculties – Congregation for Catholic Education (2012) - (available only in hard copy)
23. [QIP Notes of guidance](#)
24. [Questionnaires: impact evaluation](#)
25. [Questionnaires for self-evaluation](#)
26. [Regional branches](#)
27. [Report of activities 2007-2008](#)
28. [Report of activities 2009](#)
29. [Report of activities 2010](#)
30. [Report of activities 2011](#)
31. [Report of activities 2012](#)
32. [SER External review format](#)
33. [SER Notes of guidance for Faculties and service Units](#)
34. [Staff policy](#)
35. [Statutes](#)
36. [Strategic plan 2010-2012](#)
37. [Strategic plan 2013-2014](#)
38. [Time scale for the quality review of a unit](#)

39. Programmes and attendance lists of the seminars held in Rome (on October 2010 and 26 of January 2012), Paris (January 2011) and 2013 e-learning project
40. Minutes of Italian Bishop Conferences meetings
41. [Website http://www.avepro.va](http://www.avepro.va)

**Other reference sources used by the review panel**

42. [Bologna Stocktaking Report 2012](#).
43. INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice. Available via:  
[http://www.inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documenten/1231430767\\_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documenten/1231430767_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice%5B1%5D.pdf)
44. Council of Europe Treaty Office  
<http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=165&CM=2&DF=22/07/2013&CL=ENG>
45. Report of the panel of the review of the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European University Association. April 2009. Available via: [http://www.enqa.eu/reviews\\_reports.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/reviews_reports.lasso)

### Annex III: Site visit programme

#### Timetable for Review of Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO)

##### PREPARATORY DAY → Sunday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013

TIME - Day 1	Meeting N°	Meeting WITH	PURPOSE/DISCUSSION TOPICS
17:30 – 19:30	--	Review panel meeting	Preparatory meeting at the meeting room in Domus Sancta Martae
20:00	--	Dinner, panel meeting in private	In Domus Sancta Martae

##### DAY 1 → Monday July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

TIME - Day 1	Meeting N°	Meeting WITH	PURPOSE/DISCUSSION TOPICS
8.45 – 9.00 15 min	--	<b>Quick tour of AVEPRO facilities, settling in.</b>	Welcome, acquaintance with physical infrastructure.
09.00 – 9.45 45 min	1	<b>AVEPRO leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fr. Franco IMODA SJ, President</li> <li>• Dr. Riccardo CINQUEGRANI, Director</li> </ul>	Overview of the Agency. General management; Presentation of internal quality management arrangements,
9.45 – 11.00 75 min	2	<b>AVEPRO staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Riccardo CINQUEGRANI, Director</li> <li>• Dr. Valerio NAPOLEONI, Secretary</li> <li>• Prof. Piero TOSI, Review Manager</li> <li>• Dr. Samanta BONGINI, Researcher</li> </ul>	Activities of the Agency and respective staff. Process of self-analysis. Producing and findings of the Self-Evaluation Report. Functioning of the internal Quality Assurance system. Compliance ESG.

11.00 – 11.15	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
11.15 – 11.45 30 min Translation	3	<b>APSA</b> (Amministrazione del Patrimonio della Sede Apostolica) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Gianfranco ZAPPA, Head of Unit</li> </ul>	The legal aspects of the “budget and staff” policy of the Holy See
11.45 – 12.45 60 min Translation	4	<b>Rectors and Pro Rectors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Fr. Miroslav Konštanc ADAM OP, Rector of the <i>Pontificia Università San Tommaso d’Aquino – Angelicum</i></li> <li>• Prof. Juan Javier FLORESARCAS OSB, Rector <i>Pontificio Ateneo Sant’ Anselmo</i></li> <li>• Prof. Mgr. Patrick VALDRINI, Pro Rector of the <i>Pontificia Università Lateranense</i></li> <li>• Prof. Stefano VISINTIN OSB, Vice Rector <i>Pontificio Ateneo Sant’Anselmo</i></li> </ul>	Cooperation between the Agency and the Ecclesiastical Higher Education Institutions
12.45 – 13.00 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
13.00 – 13.45 45 min	5	<b>General Secretaries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luigi ALLENA, General Secretary of the Pontificia Università Gregoriana</li> <li>• Fr. Paolo GARUTI OP, <i>Pontificia Università San Tommaso d’Aquino – Angelicum</i></li> <li>• Fr. Jaroslaw ROCHOWIAK, <i>General Secretary of the Pontificia Università Salesiana</i></li> </ul>	Overview of the Management of a Pontifical university
13.45 – 14.30 45 min	--	Lunch, panel meeting in private	

14.30 – 15.15 45 min  Translation	6	<b>Deans</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sr. Giuseppina DEL CORE, Dean of the <i>Pontificia Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione - Auxilium</i></li> <li>• Sr. Helen ALFORD OP, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the <i>Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino - Angelicum</i></li> <li>• Prof. Fr. Dariusz KOWALCZYK SJ, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the <i>Pontificia Università Gregoriana</i></li> </ul>	Capacity of AVEPRO in supporting Quality Culture Views of AVEPRO work and role in the framework the Holy See higher Education System
15.15 – 15.30 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
15.30 - 16.15 45 min  Translation	7	<b>QA Directors/Officers in Ecclesiastical Faculties</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Plamena PETROVA, <i>Pontificio Ateneo Regina Apostolorum</i></li> <li>• Dr. Marta Giorgi DEBANNE, <i>Pontificia Università Gregoriana</i></li> <li>• Prof. Carmine MATARAZZO, <i>Pontificia Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Meridionale</i></li> <li>• Dr. Cecilia GATTI, <i>Pontificia Università Lateranense</i></li> </ul>	Quality in action: role of AVEPRO in supporting Institutions engaged in the QA process
16.15 – 17.00 60 min  -Skype- Translation	8	<b>Students</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fr. Pascal SENE (Senegal) Students' representative at the <i>Pontificia Università Gregoriana</i> (via Skype)</li> <li>• Fr. Saddesh Kumar VELO, (India), Student at <i>Claretianum Institute</i></li> <li>• Declan O'BYRNE, (Ireland) Student at <i>Istituto Universitario Sophia, Loppiano, Firenze</i></li> <li>• Rudolf KAISLER (Austria – via Skype) Student at <i>University of Vienna</i></li> </ul>	Student participation in QA processes

17.00 – 17.30	9	<b>Secretariat of State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mgr. Peter Bryan WELLS, Assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State</li> </ul>	Overview of the role of the Agency in the framework of the foreign affairs of the Holy See.
17.30 – 18.30 60 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
19.30		Dinner, panel meeting in private	In Domus Sancta Martae

**DAY 2 → Tuesday July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

TIME - Day 2	Meeting N°	Meeting WITH	PURPOSE/DISCUSSION TOPICS
8,45 – 9,30 45 min	10	<b>Congregation for Catholic Education - CCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SE Mons Angelo Vincenzo ZANI, Secretary</li> <li>Fr. Friedrich BECHINA FSO, Under secretary</li> <li>Fr. Philippe CURBELIÉ, Head of Unit Universities office</li> </ul>	Overview of Holy See Higher Education System Role of AVEPRO and compliance with ESG
9.30 – 10.00 30 min Translation	11	<b>Religious Superiors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fr. Antoine KERHUEL, General Councillor of the Society of Jesus (Jesuit), Delegate for Europe</li> <li>Sr. Yvonne REUNGOAT, General Superior of Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco</li> </ul>	Different pedagogical approaches and Quality Culture
10.00– 10.15 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
10.15 – 11.15 60 min	12	<b>Stakeholders and network</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H.E. Larry Yu-yuan WANG, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See</li> <li>Fr. Andrea TONIOLO, head of the National</li> </ul>	Overview of AVEPRO work with different stakeholders AVEPRO network outside the Higher Education borders

		<p>Service for higher studies in Theology and Religious Studies at the <i>Italian Bishop Conference</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Stefano FANTONI, President of the Italian <i>National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes - ANVUR</i></li> <li>• Dr. Luca LANTERO, Director of the CIMEA/<i>Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche</i>, expert of assessment of foreign qualifications and comparison of higher education systems <i>Institutes</i></li> <li>• Dr. Elisa MANCINELLI e-learning and ICT expert</li> </ul>	
11.15 – 11.30 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
11.30 – 12.15 45 min  Translation	13	<p><b>Site visits and Bologna Process experts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Alba DINI, Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the <i>Pontificia Università Gregoriana</i></li> <li>• Prof. Elena DI BERNARDO, Faculty of Canon Law, <i>Pontificia Università Lateranense</i></li> <li>• Prof. Dominic FARRELL, Prefect of Studies of the <i>Center for Advanced Studies of the Legionaries of Christ</i></li> <li>• Prof. Alberto LOPRESTI, Faculty of Social Sciences, <i>Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino - Angelicum</i></li> <li>• Prof. Don Michele PELLEREY SDB, former Rector of the <i>Pontificia Università Salesiana</i></li> <li>• Prof. Don Rino LA DELFA, Dean of the <i>Pontificia Facoltà Teologica di Sicilia San Giovanni Evangelista</i></li> </ul>	<p>Views of AVEPRO work and role in the framework the Holy See higher Education System Expert participation in reviews and other activities of AVEPRO; focus on consistency in reviews, training, visit organization</p> <p>AVEPRO and the European Higher Education Area: the implementation of “Bologna” in the Holy See higher Education System</p>

12.15 – 12.30 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
12.30– 13.00 30 min  -Skype-	14	<b>Site visits experts (from non-Italian faculties)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Lluís CLAVELL, site visit expert in Spain (via Skype)</li> <li>• Prof. Vidas BALCIUS, site visit expert in Lithuania (via Skype)</li> <li>• Prof. Drago PINTARIC, site visit expert in Austria</li> </ul>	Views of AVEPRO work and role in the framework the Holy See higher Education System Expert participation in reviews and other activities of AVEPRO; focus on consistency in reviews, training, visit organization
13.00 – 13.45 45 min	--	Lunch, panel meeting in private	
13.45 – 14.30 45 min	15	<b>AVEPRO Scientific Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Donald MC QUILLAN, former Chief Executive of the <i>Irish Universities Quality Board</i></li> <li>• Prof. John DAVIES, Anglia University (United Kingdom)</li> <li>• Mgr. Guy- Real THIVIERGE, General Secretary of FIUC / IFCU, President Emeritus of the International Catholic Center for Cooperation with UNESCO</li> </ul>	Overview of the role of the Council in the framework of AVEPRO activities  Role of AVEPRO and compliance with ESG
14.30 – 14.45 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
14.45 – 15.30 45 min	16	<b>Deans of Ecclesiastical Faculties members of the Scientific Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Fr. Slawomir NOWOSAD, Vice-Rector of the <i>John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin</i> (Poland)</li> <li>• Prof. Sigrid MUELLER, Vice Dean for Research of the Catholic Theological Faculty at the <i>University of Vienna</i> (Austria)</li> </ul>	Overview of the role of the Council in the framework of AVEPRO activities.  Role of AVEPRO and compliance with ESG

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Fr. Gabino URIBARRI SJ, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the <i>Universidad Pontificia Comillas</i> of Madrid (Spain)</li> </ul>	
15.30 – 15.45 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
15.45 - 16.45 60 min  via Skype	17	<b>AVEPRO Board of Directors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sjur BERGAN, Head of the <i>Department of Higher Education and History Teaching</i> at the <i>Council of Europe</i></li> <li>• Prof. Paolo BLASI, Former Rector of the <i>University of Florence</i></li> <li>• Fr. Mario TOMLJANOVIĆ, PhD candidate at the <i>Pontificia Università Gregoriana</i> (via Skype)</li> </ul>	<p>Overview of the role of the Board in the framework of AVEPRO activities</p> <p>Role of AVEPRO and compliance with ESG</p> <p>Future strategies of the Agency</p>
16.45 – 17.00 15 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
17.00 – 17.30 30 min	18	<b>President and Managing Director</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fr. Franco IMODA SJ, President</li> <li>• Dr. Riccardo CINQUEGRANI, Director</li> </ul>	Role of AVEPRO and compliance with ESG
17.00 – 17.30 30 min	--	Panel Discussion in private - break	
17.30 – 18.00 30 min	19	<b>President and Managing Director</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fr. Franco IMODA SJ, President</li> <li>• Dr. Riccardo CINQUEGRANI, Director</li> </ul>	Short Feedback from Review Team
19.30		Dinner	

### End of review

Departure of the panel members on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> of July.