

Dr. Alberto Amaral
President of the Management Board
Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES)
Praça de Alvalade, n. 6 – 5º Frente
1700-036 Lisbon, Portugal

Bern, 4 July 2019

Subject: Reconfirmation of membership of A3ES in ENQA

Dear Alberto,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 20 June 2019, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm the A3ES membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that A3ES is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and thus fulfils the membership criteria according to article 6, paragraph 1 of ENQA's rules of procedure. The Board congratulates A3ES on the good work that it is carrying out.

The Board would like to receive a follow-up report within two years of its decision, i.e. by June 2021.

The Board also encourages A3ES to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – an enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of membership of A3ES.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, A3ES is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

Aside from the use of student reviewers, the agency has interpreted the concept of a peer reviewer in an academic sense i.e. subject-matter expertise, and this is not fully aligned to the purposes of their assessments, particularly institutional assessments. The agency is recommended to take a wider interpretation, aligned to the explanation of the concept of peer reviewer in the Guidelines for ESG 2.4. In so doing, the existing network of institutional quality assurance officers provides a group with expertise that might prove useful for institutional assessments.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Article 25 of Regulations on the assessment and accreditation procedures provides a list of items that are useful, but these are not currently explicitly established in processes as criteria. The agency is recommended to use Article 25 of the Regulations as the basis for providing a range of overarching criteria to complement the existing specific criteria, thus allowing EATs to broaden the scope for interpretation of specific criteria in order to apply these more appropriately for the diverse contexts within which different HEI's operate. Furthermore, at present, in many cases, each criterion and related guideline provided to EATs and HEIs usually repeats the same statement, in the main simply changing the verb. Therefore, in practice, the guidelines do not provide HEI's and EATs with helpful support with the interpretation of criteria and, as a consequence, the subsequent application of the criteria. The agency is therefore recommended to clarify the distinct purposes of their criteria and guideline statements and, arising from this, reformulate a series of separate but complementary guideline and criteria statements.