
ENQA AGENCY REVIEW: ITALIAN NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES (ANVUR)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ANVUR, the Italian national agency for the evaluation of universities and research institutes, aims at becoming member of ENQA and to be registered in EQAR. Both processes foresee to be substantially compliant with the ESG. The focus of this review, therefore, is to evaluate ANVUR’s degree of compliance with Part 3 – and consequently Part 2 – of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The review was coordinated by ENQA and the review panel was composed including 2 ENQA nominees, 1 ESU nominee and 1 EUA nominee.

ANVUR is an independent public body which, among its various tasks, oversees the national quality assurance (QA) system for state recognized universities and is responsible for their institutional and programme assessment. ANVUR was legally established in 2006 but started to operate in 2011. The Legislative Decree n. 19/2012 has introduced the QA system in the Italian higher education landscape. Following this legislation, the agency developed its own assessment criteria, methodologies and procedures, taking the ESG into due account.

The activities of ANVUR that were considered by the panel in this review are the following:

- Accreditation of new programmes (since 2013);
- Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes – AVA system (since 2014);
- Accreditation of PhD Programmes (since 2011);
- Initial and periodic accreditation of programmes in Art, Music and Dance – AFAM (since 2016: initial; since 2018: periodic).

The external review takes each of these activities into consideration, although more weight has been given to the AVA system, introduced explicitly in the spirit of the ESG and representing ANVUR’s core external quality assurance activity. The panel’s final judgement about ESG compliance is a comprehensive assessment of ANVUR’s activities, bearing in mind that this is ANVUR’s first external review and that some activities run since only a couple of years.

The panel reached the following conclusions on the degree of compliance with the ESG:

ESG Part 3	Degree of compliance
Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	Substantially compliant
Standard 3.2 Official status	Fully compliant
Standard 3.3 Independence	Substantially compliant
Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis	Substantially compliant
Standard 3.5 Resources	Substantially compliant
Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct	Substantially compliant
Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies	Fully compliant
ESG Part 2	
Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance	Partially compliant
Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose	Substantially compliant
Standard 2.3 Implementing processes	Substantially compliant
Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts	Partially compliant
Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes	Fully compliant
Standard 2.6 Reporting	Partially compliant
Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals	Substantially compliant

Globally, the panel considers ANVUR as being compliant with the ESG. The agency is recommended to take appropriate action to achieve at least substantial compliance in all standards at the earliest opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted in the period November 2017 – May 2019.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is ANVUR's first external review, the panel was expected to pay particular attention to the policies, procedures, and criteria in place, being aware that full evidence of concrete results in all areas may not be available at this stage.

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2018-19 external review of ANVUR was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of ANVUR was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Tue Vinther-Jørgensen (Chair), Chief Consultant at the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Denmark (ENQA nominee);
- Laura Beccari (Secretary), International Affairs Officer and Project Manager at the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance, Switzerland (ENQA nominee);
- Mar Campins Eritja, Full Professor in Public International Law at Universitat de Barcelona, Spain (EUA nominee);
- Ignas Gaižiūnas, Master's student in Physics – study programme Theoretical Physics and Astrophysics at Vilnius University, Lithuania (ESU nominee).

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

On 14th of November, 2017, with a formal letter to ENQA, ANVUR expressed its interest to undergo the procedure for admission to ENQA, and at the same time to apply for inclusion in EQAR. After receiving the confirmation of eligibility from EQAR (1st of March, 2018), on March 19th 2018 ANVUR published the document Terms of Reference (ToR) in its website.

The writing of the SAR was a collaborative effort of ANVUR staff and its Governing Board. A working group was appointed to draft the SAR and supervise the process. The working group finalised a draft at the end of July 2018. A revised document was shared with the Advisory Committee of ANVUR at the end of August. Before sending the report to the review panel, ENQA has pre-screened the SAR and asked ANVUR to include more analysis and self-criticism in its report.

The review panel received the final SAR on September 20th, 2018. Some of the annexes still being under translation process, the panel received the missing annexes on October 15th. After this date, the panel has duly scrutinized the documentation received and convened that, in order to carry out an evidence-based review, some important supplementary documentation was still required. The list of the wished supplementary documentation was sent to ANVUR on October 30th. ANVUR reacted promptly to the panel's request and delivered the available documentation to the panel gradually, between November 1st and November 19th.

The SAR gives some basic information about the higher education system in Italy, its legal framework, the actors involved and the role of ANVUR since its organizational establishment in 2010; it also presents the agency's management and governance structure. The report gives then a description of ANVUR's activities, including an analysis of the extent to which ANVUR fulfils Part 2 and 3 of the ESGs. The report concludes

with a profile of strengths and weaknesses of the Italian QA system and of the main challenges ANVUR is facing. Annexes include examples of ANVUR reports, guidelines, and a summary of the biannual report on the state of university and research in Italy, all of which were translated in English. The supplementary documentation requested by the panel includes mainly links to public reports, public documentation and public regulations.

SITE VISIT

The site visit of ANVUR took place from November 20th to November 22nd, preceded by a preparatory meeting of the review panel on November 19th. Representatives of ANVUR's whole organisational structure were interviewed: staff, management, governing board and advisory board. All relevant external stakeholders were also met in separate interviews: representatives of the HEIs (rectors, students, internal quality assurance actors), experts for ANVUR's procedures, representatives of the Ministry and of key national bodies (rectors' conference, representatives of the labour market, students' union, etc.). Student representatives were both interviewed in the relevant interview groups and in a separate session with student representatives only (all categories mixed), in order to make sure their view had sufficient room to be freely put forward. Unfortunately, and contrary to the schedule, no representatives from the national student union showed-up at the site visit.

During the final debriefing session, where the main outcomes of the review were exposed by the review chair, the large majority of ANVUR staff was present, showing great commitment towards the European recognition processes.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

(Drawn from the SAR)

To date, the higher education institutions (HEIs) composing the Italian University system are 97: 61 public universities, 19 private universities, 11 private online universities, 6 special tertiary education schools which provide doctoral training. By size (according to the number of students and considering both the state and non-state universities), there are 12 large universities with more than 40,000 students, 29 middle universities with a number of students between 15,000 and 40,000, and 56 small universities (including special schools) with less than 15,000 students.

In 2017 there were around 1.691.000 students enrolled in 4.654 study programmes (in 1st and 2nd Bologna cycles). Students can enrol after having completed 13 schooling years, including primary school as well as lower and upper secondary education.

According to the Bologna degree structure, universities can issue "Diploma di laurea" (Bachelor degree - 1st cycle, 180 ECTS, EQF level = 6), "Diploma di laurea magistrale" (Master degrees - 2nd cycle, 120 ECTS, EQF level = 7). The latter can also be awarded after completion of a longer unique cycle programme ("corso a ciclo unico"). HEIs can also issue the following state-recognized post-graduate diplomas: "Diploma di specializzazione" (EQF level = 8); "Dottorato di ricerca" (PhD; EQF level = 8).

The *Diploma di specializzazione* is obtained at the end of a programme of study lasting no less than two years at specific specializing schools (subject to supervision of the Ministry of Education and Research and of the Ministry of Health) belonging to the following areas: health, veterinary, cultural heritage and psychology.

In Italy, foreign universities can only provide for part of their curricula (and not entire programmes; Law n. 4/1999). After the approval of Law 4/1999, approx. 60 subsidiaries of foreign universities were present in Italy.

Higher Education in Art, Music and Dance (AFAM) is part of the Italian higher education system and includes: academies of fine arts; legally recognized state institutions; state music conservatories; officially recognized

music institutes; design colleges; the National Academy of Dance; the National Academy of Drama; private institutions authorized to award qualifications of higher education in Art, Music and Dance (art.11 DPR 08.07.2005, n.212).

Today AFAM institutions are 155, mostly academies of fine arts (39) and music conservatories (59). They carry out teaching, production and research in visual arts, music, dance, drama and design.

In the academic year 2016/17, 63.369 students were enrolled in AFAM institutions, which offered 4.594 programmes (out of which 2.479 1st cycle ones; 2.107 2nd cycles ones; and 8 single-cycle ones).

The AFAM system reports the highest percentage of international students among HEIs in Italy (in the academic year 2016/17, 17,7% international students were enrolled – 14,9% in the first cycle programmes, 27,3% in second cycle ones – against 4,5% at universities).

AFAM institutions offer currently Bachelor and Master degrees, they are not yet authorized to offer PhD courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Traditionally external quality assurance in Italy is mainly focussed on research (inputs and outcomes). Before the establishment of ANVUR, another entity existed, named Comitato nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario (CNVSU), whose activities were largely dedicated to the assessment of research (indicators, data collection, analysis serving the decision-makers and allocation of funds). The law of 2010 put the basis for the establishment of ANVUR, replacing CNVSU and increasing its scope to the assessment of teaching activities, among others, in addition to research ones. In its structure ANVUR reflects this historical development, with the assessment of research as established practice and new activities having been gradually developed, the last 2 ones – periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (AVA system); accreditation of programmes in art, music and dance (AFAM institutions) – having been launched respectively in 2014 and 2016. For the scope of this review most of the external quality assurance activities assessed are therefore recently established, whereas the activities within the field of research are covered by this review insofar as they relate to the accreditation of PhD programmes. Among the external QA activities ANVUR conducts at present, the AVA system can be considered its core business in external quality assurance.

Quality assurance in Italy is highly regulated for universities, the overall outcomes being ideally comparable and allowing for national analysis then useful for the HE sector and particularly for legislators and decision-makers, including the allocation of funds. All collected data (according to homogeneous criteria) are processed by ANVUR and disseminated in the biannual report on the state of HE and research in Italy. Accreditation of new programmes of all 3 Bologna cycles, as well as institutional accreditation is obligatory for all HEIs issuing academic degrees in Italy. ANVUR is responsible for defining quality criteria, requirements and indicators as well as efficiency and sustainability indicators. Following a proposal by ANVUR, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MIUR) grants the accreditation. Accreditation of universities is regulated by the Legislative Decree no. 19/2012, implementing the Law no. 240/2010.

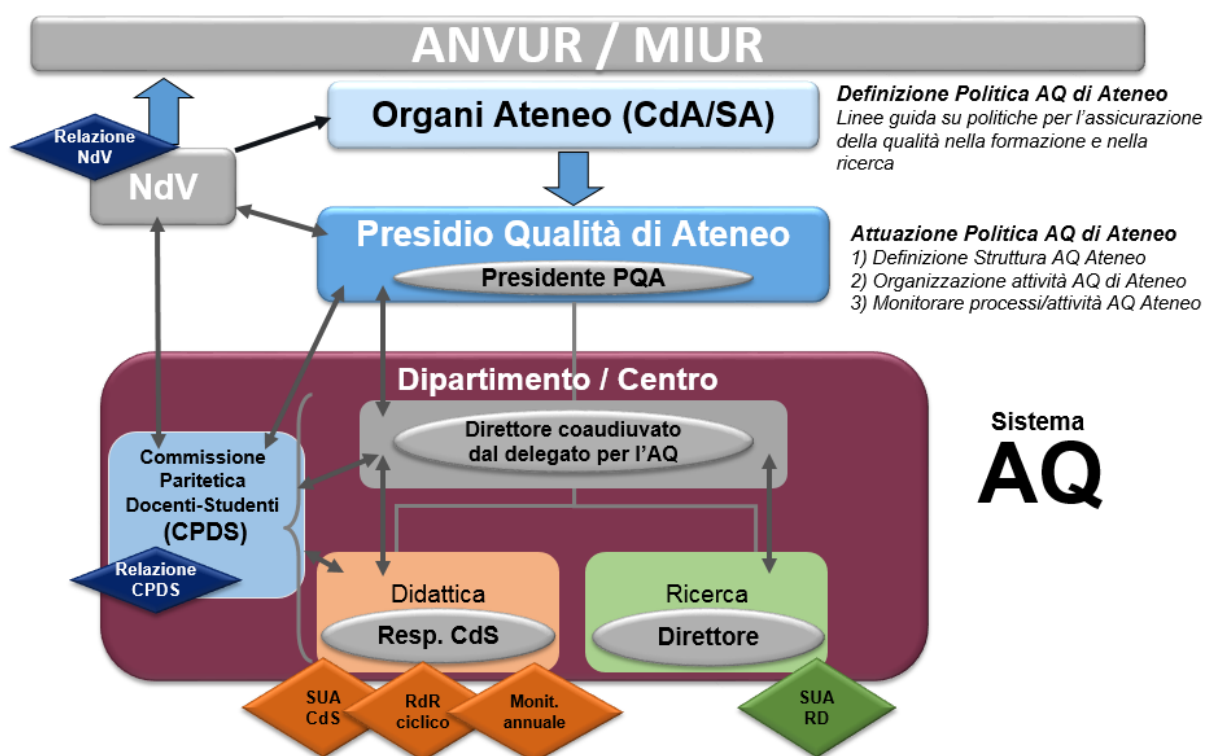
QA activities are defined in bylaws with clear mandates for ANVUR. Up to the recruitment and appointment of single staff units at ANVUR and of ad hoc QA commissions within HEIs, all is highly regulated. The intense degree of normative and regulatory development of ANVUR-related activity leaves very little room for creative action, insofar as it has a wide incidence in the different elements and agents involved in QA processes and imposes strict confines in the development of ANVUR's activity. In particular, AFAM and PhD sectors involve very limited legal mandate for ANVUR in the external assessments, in comparison to the AVA system where ANVUR has a large 'marge de manoeuvre'. In spite of that, independence is not jeopardized insofar as it is explicitly defined by law as well.

The AVA¹ system was developed for three main objectives:

- to provide the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) assurance that HEIs operating in Italy uniformly deliver a quality service adequate for their users and society;
- to assure that HEIs are responsible in their use of public resources and in carrying out teaching and research activities;
- to improve the quality of teaching and research.

In the AVA system the actors involved within HEIs are defined by law. As shown in Picture 1, they include for each university: an institutional strategical Board of Directors (*Consiglio di amministrazione – CdA*); an internal QA institutional implementing body (*Presidio Qualità di Ateneo – PQA*); internal QA teams for study programmes, composed of teaching and student representatives (*Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti – CPDS*); and an independent internal-external evaluation unit, acting as a bridge between the HEI and ANVUR (*Nucleo di Valutazione – NdV*).

Picture 1 - Actors involved in the AVA system²



Also in the AFAM system the law defines the actors involved within the HEIs. The system is less structured. The institutional bodies are: the Board of Directors (*Consiglio di Amministrazione – CdA*); the Independent external-internal Evaluation Unit (*Nucleo di Valutazione*).

All university documents necessary for the external QA processes must already be available and used within the institute as part of the internal QA system.

Nucleo di Valutazione NdV

It is normally composed of 6 members, mostly external (coming from other universities), among which at least 2 are QA experts (not necessarily within HE). Normally they are in charge for a mandate of 4 years. It acts as a bridge between the HEI and AVNUR.

The NdV checks in a continuous and systematic way the University's performances in the organization, in the research and in the didactic activity and it ascertains the overall quality of the processes, contributing to the improvement of the internal self-evaluation system and the promotion of merit.

¹ Autovalutazione, Valutazione periodica, Accreditemento.

² Source: Università degli Studi di Trento (<https://www.unitn.it/ateneo/58257/il-sistema-qualita>).

In particular, NdV formulates, in full autonomy, an annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the achievement of the program objectives and submits it to the Board of Directors by May of each year. The NdV draws up an Annual Report to be sent to ANVUR by 30/04, which includes the report on AVA activities.

With regard to the accreditation procedures (institutional and programme), the NdV performs the following functions:

- expresses a binding opinion on the possession of the requirements for initial accreditation for the purpose of establishing new study programmes;
- verifies the correct functioning of the QA system and provides support to ANVUR and the MIUR in monitoring compliance with the initial and periodic accreditation requirements;
- provides support to the university governing bodies and to ANVUR in monitoring the results achieved compared to the indicators for the periodic evaluation, as well as to the university in the development of further indicators for the achievement of the objectives of its strategic planning, also on the basis of indicators identified by the CPDSs.

Presidio Qualità di Ateneo (PQA)

It is composed by professors, other teaching staff, central services, QA administrative staff, student representatives, all of which come from that university. It supervises the adequate and coherent conduct of the university's QA procedures, based on the guidelines of the governing bodies. It reports annually to the NdV. The PQA plays a central role in the internal QA through the following functions:

- promoting a culture of quality and continuous improvement;
- advice to the HEI's governing bodies on the issues of QA;
- proposal of common tools for QA and training activities for their application;
- support to the university structures in the management of QA processes;
- monitoring of the AQ processes of the entire university.

The PQA has the following competencies:

- advice to the university governing bodies for the definition and updating of the QA policy and processes;
- definition and updating of the instruments for the implementation of the university's QA policy;
- organization and management of staff training involved in QA of education and research;
- monitoring of the regular and adequate conduct of the QA procedures, in accordance with the declared internal planning, for the activities of education and research;
- support for courses and departments for common tasks of quality system development;
- support for the management of information and documentary flows relating to QA.

Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti (CPDS)

The CPDS are established in the academic structure at study programme level, with the largest possible representation of students of a given programme. They are in charge of monitoring the educational offer and quality of teaching, identifying indicators for the evaluation of results and formulating opinions on the activation and suppression of study programmes. They are required to prepare an annual report that takes into consideration the whole educational offer, with particular reference to the outcomes of the students' opinion, indicating any problems specific to the individual programme.

CPDS have a dual nature, reflecting the position of students who are, at the same time, active members of the academic community and users of the services. Therefore, they play a central role both in the improvement processes (quality enhancement) and in external assurance and assessment (quality accountability).

The CPDS can also formulate opinions:

- on the validity of the reasons that led to the suppression of a study programme and on the effects that this could have on the students still in progress;
- on new proposals of educational offers and on the adequacy of the physical, teaching and service structures envisaged for the new study programme, also in relation to the effects that the new activation could have on the dedicated resources and on the organization of the programmes already in place;
- on the dispositions of the study programme regulations concerning the consistency between the credits assigned to the educational activities and the planned learning outcomes.

ANVUR

ANVUR was legally established in 2006 by the Law nr. 286. The first Regulation concerning the structure and functioning of the agency was set by the Presidential Decree nr. 76 in 2010. The agency started to operate in 2011, after the nomination of the Governing Board members. Responsibility for QA of higher education was delegated to ANVUR with the Legislative Decree n. 19/2012.

ANVUR assessments span the whole range of universities' activities (research, teaching, third mission/impact, administration performance) and covers as well AFAM institutions and research bodies. Concerning research and third mission/impact the law states that ANVUR must assess the quality of the processes, results and research outputs resulting from the management, teaching and research activities, including technology transfer from universities and research institutes. The results

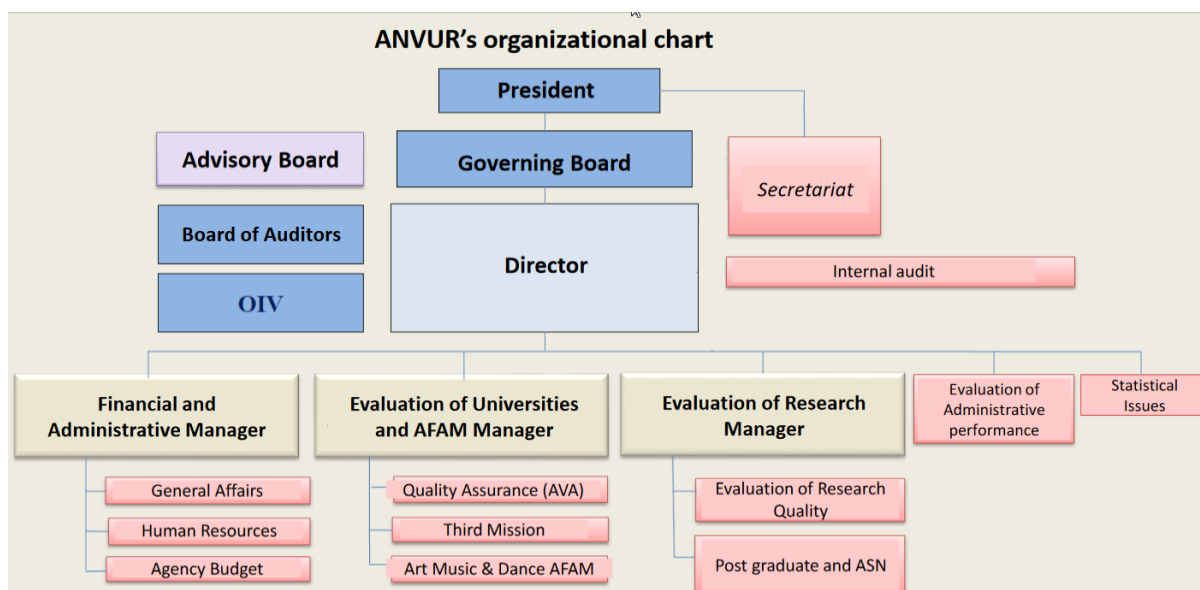
of these activities have been used, inter alia, to allocate public funding among Italian HEIs. ANVUR also contributes to the National Scientific Qualification System (*Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale*) in setting minimum standards of research production for candidates. In 2013, ANVUR was also required by law to supervise the functioning of the internal administrative evaluation systems of universities and research bodies, setting performance standards and monitoring compliance.

ANVUR'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

The organization of ANVUR is defined by the Presidential Decree 76/2010. As shown in Picture 2, it includes the President, the Governing Board (all of which are full-time employees), the Advisory Board, the Board of Auditors and the Director (who manages all operational sub-units). The activities of the agency also benefit from an independent performance assessment body (OIV). The composition, recruitment and appointed procedures of all functions is strictly defined by law and follow the criteria of the Italian public administration.

As described in the SAR, the **President** has the legal representation of the agency, is elected within and by the **Governing Board** and is in charge for 4 years. The latter is made up of 7 members (including the President) appointed by presidential decree under the proposal of the Minister of Education, after hearing the competent parliamentary commissions. Applications follow a public call. It is a full-time activity, incompatible with any further employment including teaching and research. The Governing Board determines the agency's strategic plan and is the decision-making body for accreditation procedures conducted by ANVUR, although a decision is officialised only after issuing of the corresponding ministerial decree by MIUR. The Board also defines criteria, methods and timing of part of the evaluation activities. Members are in charge for 4 years.

Picture 2 – Organizational chart of ANVUR



The **Board of Auditors** is composed by 3 members (2 of them appointed by the Minister of Education and 1 by the Minister of Economy and Finance) in charge for 4 years to verify the administrative performance and the accounting regularity.

Appointed by the President under Governing Board proposal, the **Advisory Board** gives opinions and makes proposals to the Governing Board, in particular on the guidelines defining evaluation criteria and methods. It remains in office for 4 years and, according to the law, is made up of representatives of the *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (CUN), *Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane* (CRUI), *Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari* (CNSU), *Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro*,

National Academy of the Lincei, European Research Council (ERC), European University Association (EUA), European Students' Union (ESU), OECD General Secretariat.

The Governing Board appoints, among **OIV** members (established at the Department of Public Administration of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers), a person who performs the activities of OIV and remains in office for 3 years. The OIV monitors the overall functioning of the administrative system, the transparency and integrity of internal controls and prepares an annual report, formulating proposals and recommendations.

The **Director** is appointed by the Governing Board, following a proposal by the President. He/she is responsible for the management and internal organization of the agency; he/she is the head of the general managerial structure and of the staff; he/she directs, coordinates and controls the activities of the agency.

The agency is organized in 3 areas, each headed by an executive, covering a total of 10 units run by heads of units. The Director and the 7³ members of the Governing Board are full time employees of the agency. Staff includes 35 permanent and 13 non-permanent FTE units, among which:

- AVA-AFAM area (evaluation of universities and AFAM at institutional and programme level), 17 FTE staff units;
- Research area (evaluation of research activities, PhD programmes and research bodies), 14 FTE staff units;
- Evaluation of Administrative Performance and Statistical Units, 7 FTE staff units.

ANVUR'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

ANVUR's activities are the following:

- Accreditation of new Higher Education Institutions (suspended; new guidelines and methodologies are under development);
- Accreditation of new university programmes (since 2013), ex-ante procedure, approx. 100 proceedings per year;
- Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes – AVA system (since 2014), cyclic evaluation, approx. 15 procedures per year (10% sample programme assessments integrated in the institutional accreditation procedure);
- Accreditation of PhD Programmes (since 2011), ex-ante for new programmes with successive annual renewal, over 900 procedures per year;
- Initial accreditation of 1st cycle programmes in Art, Music and Dance – AFAM (since 2016), at legally recognized Academies of Fine Art and private AFAM institutions, so far approx. 50 proceedings per year; since 2018: initial accreditation of 2nd cycle programmes in Art, Music and Dance at all AFAM institutions (584 proceedings in 2018, including rejected applications).
- Periodic assessment of programmes in Art, Music and Dance (since 2018), cyclic system for accredited programmes at private AFAM institutions (at the end of the first and third year of activity and at least every three years afterwards), so far procedures are conducted at approx. 15 institutions per year;
- Data collection within the accreditation of Post-Graduate Medical Programmes (since 2017), annually, over 1350 dossiers per year (role of ANVUR limited to handling data on the qualifications of scientific staff to the National Observatory for Medical Post-Graduate Education, the body responsible of accreditation in this field).
- Other activities in the evaluation of research, research bodies and on the habilitation of professors.

³ In November 2018, there were only 6 members because the mandate of one member had expired and had not yet been replaced. The procedure for the replacement was expected to be completed in April 2019.

The Terms of Reference agreed with ENQA and EQAR indicate what activities are to be addressed in the present external review. They include all activities listed above except from the last bullet point. However, the review panel has discarded the following activities from the review, for the following reasons:

- Accreditation of new HEIs: this activity has been suspended since end of 2017. Previous instruments and methodologies do not apply anymore. New guidelines are under development. This activity may be reactivated in 2020, if the Ministry acts accordingly. The panel suggests that, once the activity is introduced, ANVUR informs ENQA and EQAR through the appropriate channels, if applicable.
- Accreditation of Post-Graduate Medical Programmes: this activity is conducted under the entire responsibility of the National Observatory for Medical Post-graduate Education. Because of the longstanding tradition of ANVUR (previously CNVSU) in the definition of indicators to assess the scientific qualification of academic staff, the Observatory benefited from this experience and was assisted by ANVUR in the development of these indicators for the faculty in charge of medical specializations programmes. ANVUR was then given the mandate to collect and annually handle these statistical data to the Observatory. ANVUR's task does not represent an external quality assurance process that falls under the scope of the ESG and cannot be assessed against the ESG. No evaluations are made, no decisions are taken by ANVUR in relation to handling these data.

ANVUR activities that will be considered for this external review are the remaining ones. However, the review panel wishes to stress that it has given more weight to ANVUR's actual core business in external quality assurance, namely the AVA system. It is also important to mention that the accreditation of PhD programmes and its annual renewal is a practice that the panel considers at the borderline of being external QA in the spirit of the ESG. The design of this activity was developed in order to fulfil the legal mandate, and the latter does not take the ESG into account. Nevertheless, the panel believes ANVUR has the potential of improving this activity further as indicated in the review recommendations for improvement. All activities considered for the external review are described in the following paragraphs.

Accreditation of new university programmes

The initial accreditation of new university programmes is carried out by the AVA unit in the period end of February - early June every year. Annually, there are approximately a hundred proposals for new study programmes that are assessed by Committees of Experts (CEV) appointed by ANVUR. Each programme is assessed by 3 experts selected from ANVUR's register of experts. Students are not included as experts for this activity. One member is nominated by ANVUR as president of the experts' panel. Accreditation is normally conducted sur dossier, unless it requires an on-site visit (lasting up to 2 days), which is decided on a case-by-case basis. Each member of the experts' panel (but the president) prepares an independent evaluation report. Based on these two evaluations, the president drafts in his/her turn a preliminary assessment report, which is communicated to the university. The HEI has the right to express counter-arguments and to provide additional evidence to the experts' panel. Taking into account this further exchange, if any, the panel drafts the final report and shares it with the HEI. Based on this review report (which is not publicly available), ANVUR's Governing Board decides on the accreditation and communicates its proposal to MIUR who – in case the decision is positive – issues the official approval of study programmes (public decree).

Pre-requisite to open an accreditation procedure is the fulfilment of the minimal number of qualified teaching staff. If this criterion is satisfied, ANVUR assesses new programmes against the following requirement:

The intended learning outcomes are consistent with the cultural, scientific and social needs and take into account the peculiar characteristics that distinguish Bachelor's from Master's degrees. The availability of adequate teaching resources, personnel and services are guaranteed. Monitoring of results and strategies adopted for quality and its improvement, as well as student-

centered learning are taken care of. For international study courses the provisions of the Joint Accreditation Approach adopted by the EHEA Ministers in 2015 apply.

The guide intended for HEIs is publicly available at <http://www.anvur.it/attivita/ava/accreditamento-iniziale/linee-guida-per-laccreditamento-iniziale/>:

Linee Guida per l'accREDITamento iniziale dei Corsi di Studio di nuova attivazione da parte delle Commissioni di Esperti della Valutazione (CEV), ai sensi dell'art. 4, comma 1 del Decreto Ministeriale 12 dicembre 2016 n. 987 - Versione 13/10/2017.

Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (AVA system)

The periodic accreditation of universities has a maximum duration of five years. It is granted by MIUR after ANVUR has verified with document analysis and on-site visits, the fulfilment of the requirements set by law, including requisites of quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the activities carried out by universities. The periodic accreditation of the university determines the periodic accreditation of all its programmes (for a 3-year period, except those evaluated negatively, which are cancelled), based on a 10% sample of pre-selected programmes that are assessed in conjunction with the institutional accreditation procedure. The institutional accreditation under the AVA system begun in November 2014, and so far, ANVUR has not yet been involved in the periodic re-assessment of accredited programmes.

The procedure follows a publicly available guide to the intention of HEIs, where all steps are carefully described and explained. The guide explicitly mentions that the process must be consistent with the ESG. The number of experts appointed for each AVA external QA procedure ranges between approx. 7 and 30, depending on the number of sample-programmes and departments included in the assessment. They are chosen among ANVUR's official and publicly available experts register. Each team is composed by a president (drafting the final report), a coordinator (ensures consistency and evidence-based assessments), system-experts, discipline-experts, students-experts, e-learning experts (for online institutions or programmes) and a visit contact person (mediates all communications with ANVUR and the HEI and takes care of logistics). The on-site visit lasts between 3 and 5 days, depending on the size of the university.

The starting principle of this activity is that HEIs are self-responsible for their quality, their reporting activity, their transparency and their subsequent public accountability. The external QA verifies the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal QA system. The Students' opinion questionnaires on teaching activities is an integral part of the internal quality assurance system at HEIs and duly taken into account in the external quality assurance procedure.

Institutional accreditation is assessed by a scoring system ranging from A (best possible outcome) to E (insufficient outcome). In case of an insufficient score ANVUR proposes to MIUR the suppression of the institution or sample-programme in question. In such a case, all enrolled students can still complete their studies, and obtain the related qualification. If a judgement is conditional (D), the validity of the accreditation will be bound to the fulfilment of conditions in a given period of time.

The timeline of the accreditation process is set together with each individual HEI at least one year in advance. The selected sample of programmes and departments are communicated to the university under assessment at least 5 months before the on-site visit and are chosen according to publicly available criteria.

These are the main requirements to be fulfilled within the AVA accreditation system:

Requirement	Description
1. University vision, strategies and policies on teaching and research quality	The University has a solid and consistent teaching and research quality assurance (QA) system, which supports continuous improvement and strengthens external responsibility. This system has been clearly translated into public strategic planning and guideline documents. The consistency between the strategic vision and the objectives defined at the central level are ensured

	regarding policies, internal organisation, use of teaching and teaching personnel research potential according to individual inclinations, results achieved, periodic verification and the application of improvement measures.
2. Efficacy of the University Quality Assurance policies	The Quality Assurance system implemented by the University is effective for defining internal responsibilities, information flows and the interactions between the responsible organisations and their management role in the Departments and study programmes evaluation and self-assessment processes.
3. Programmes Quality	The objectives identified in the Academic Programme planning are consistent with the cultural, scientific and social needs and consider the character that distinguish the Bachelor's and master's degree Programmes. For each Programme the availability of adequate teaching resources, personnel and services are guaranteed, monitoring of results and strategies adopted for correction and improvement and student-centred learning are included. For international study programmes, the provisions of the Joint Accreditation Approach adopted by the EHEA Ministers in 2015 shall apply.
4. Research and third mission quality (at institutional and departments level)	Institution: The research and third mission Quality Assurance system is effective, with a policy defined and ordered by the University and is followed by the Departments and similar organisations. Departments: The Departments define and implement strategies which improve the research quality according to University strategic planning and with necessary resources.

Each *requirement* is composed by one or more assessment elements, called *indicators*, for a total of 11 (a specific one is added for online universities). For each indicator, a number of *focus points* is given, for a total of 30, which define with more detail the different aspects to be evaluated for each indicator. The expert's panel gives a motivated assessment for each focus point, and assigns a score comprised between 1 and 10. Results are then aggregated (with specific weights) to formulate the final accreditation result (scores A to E).

The panel drafts a preliminary assessment report, which is sent by ANVUR to the university within 2 months after the visit. The HEI has the right to express counter-arguments (within 1 month). Taking into account this further exchange, if any, the panel drafts the final report (within 1 month) and sends it to ANVUR. Based on this review report, the AVA unit at ANVUR drafts a synthetic comprehensive report that is then shared with the HEI together with the final expert report. The Governing board decides on the accreditation and communicates its proposal to MIUR who grants the accreditation by ministerial decree, publicly available. ANVUR report is then made publicly available.

Three years after the institutional periodic accreditation, the programme accreditation is renewed based on an ANVUR distance evaluation. Normally, this assessment will be based on the verification of the persistence of compliance with the initial accreditation requirements, the outcome of the Independent Evaluation Unit (NdV) internal evaluation, and the ANVUR monitoring outcome. When there are highly critical aspects, or following the Ministry or the NdV's suggestion, ANVUR can arrange a specific programme evaluation.

If the assessment is positive, the programme accreditation's duration is automatically extended until the end of the institutional accreditation. Otherwise, the accreditation is revoked, and the programme is cancelled by a specific ministerial decree.

The guide intended for HEIs is publicly available at <http://www.anvur.it/attivita/ava/accreditamento-periodico/linee-guida-per-laccreditamento-periodico/>:
Periodic Accreditation of Universities and Academic Programmes - Version 10/08/2017.

Initial and periodic accreditation of programmes in Art, Music and Dance (AFAM)

Programme accreditation at AFAM Institutions is granted by MIUR. Since 2016 structured ANVUR procedures are in place for the accreditation of first cycle diploma programmes of legally recognized Academies of Fine Art and private institutions. Periodic accreditation (renewal of the initial one) is carried

out at the end of the first and third year of activity of the accredited programme and at least every three years afterwards. Since 2018, ANVUR is also given the mandate to conduct the initial accreditation of second cycle diploma programmes of all HEIs in Art, Music and Dance.

The actors involved in the AFAM accreditation system are MIUR, ANVUR and the AFAM Committee, appointed by the Minister, responsible for the evaluation of the coherence of curricula with the national standards.

ANVUR is in charge of evaluating:

- general quality requirements: verifying the academic governance functions and activities and checking the existence of the buildings' security certifications requested by law;
- quality requirements specific for the typology of the artistic programmes and for the level of education requested, such as the artistic quality of the Faculty (teaching, learning and research qualification), the adequacy of scientific and technical equipment for the specific programmes, as well as the possession of financial sustainability requisites.

Pre-requisites to deposit application for accreditation are for institutions to demonstrate at least five years' experience in higher education in Art, Music and Dance and for programmes to have completed at least one three-year cycle.

Applications are submitted annually in the period 1 February - 31 March. The evaluation is carried out by the AFAM unit of ANVUR in the period March- September every year, under MIUR's mandate. Annually, there are about 50 proposals that are assessed by specific Committees of Experts appointed by ANVUR. In 2018, with the launch of the accreditation of 2nd cycle programmes, the AFAM unit received 584 applications that were assessed by a specific High Committee of Experts selected by ANVUR among the system-experts from the register of AFAM experts. Normally, 2-3 experts per programme are appointed; so far, no students were involved as members of experts' panels in any type of AFAM accreditations. Site visits are in principle foreseen for new offering institutions and systematically every third year or if there is a change in location or responsible professors. After the visit, a detailed written report is produced, including any issues that arose during the visit.

Experts discuss their evaluation in official meetings with the AFAM Unit and issue an experts-AFAM analysis report. ANVUR's Governing Board approves the report. Based on the advice received by ANVUR, the Ministry grants (or denies) the authorisation to the institution to activate the new programmes by public decree. The decree specifies the programmes for which the institution is authorised to grant the relevant 1st or 2nd level AFAM academic degrees. No assessments reports are made publicly available.

The programmes of private AFAM institutions are subject to periodic evaluation (concerning resource requirement maintenance, as per art. 11 of Presidential Decree 8 July 2005, no. 212), at the end of the first and third year of activity and at least every three years afterwards. Private institutions must annually update and communicate in the dedicated IT platform data related to its bodies, teaching and administrative personnel, students, actions for the right to education, the economic-financial situation and any additional data necessary for the periodic ANVUR evaluation. If an institution has not made significant changes in terms of faculty and/or building/infrastructures since the initial accreditation visit, a site visit at the end of the first and third years is not required⁴.

The assessment takes into account:

a) analysis of the Independent Evaluation Unit Annual Report and the results of the teaching and research quality monitoring and control activity carried out by all the parties involved in the institution quality system; the Students' opinion questionnaires on teaching activities is an integral part of the internal quality assurance system.

⁴ Page 48 SAR.

b) assessment of the information contained in IT platform for the periodic assessment.

The lack of one or more requirements under art. 11 of Presidential Decree no. 212/2005 results in the revocation of the accreditation, which is ordered by MIUR decree, based on the ANVUR's judgement. In this case, all enrolled students can complete their studies, and obtain the related qualification.

Guides intended to HEIs are publicly available at <http://www.anvur.it/attivita/afam/>

Criteria generali 2017 per la predisposizione della Relazione annuale del Nucleo di Valutazione delle Istituzioni AFAM, approved by the Governing Board on 29 November 2017

Valutazione delle proposte di autorizzazione al rilascio di titoli AFAM, ai sensi dell'art. 11 del D.P.R. 8 luglio 2005, n. 212, Requisiti minimi di risorse per i corsi AFAM, Versione 24 gennaio 2018

Linee guida per l'accredimento di nuovi corsi di diploma accademico di II livello biennali AFAM 2018, ai sensi dell'art. 8 del D.M. 9 gennaio 2018 n. 14, approved by the Governing Board on 25 July 2018.

Accreditation of PhD programmes

New publicly available ministerial Guidelines (14 April 2017) clearly define the requisites to be fulfilled by new or modified PhD programmes in order to be accredited. These guidelines do not define who verifies if criteria are fulfilled and how. Art. 19 of the law 240/2010 foresees that PhD programmes must be accredited by MIUR, after hearing ANVUR, before they can be launched (ex-ante). In 2013 ANVUR was entrusted with the task of introducing a system of indicators defined ex-ante for the verification of the possession of the appropriate educational, structural, organizational, qualification requirements for teachers and research activities, as well as of economic-financial sustainability, for all new PhD programmes. The ministerial Decree nr. 45 of 8 February 2013 (the Regulations concerning the accreditation of the PhD programmes and criteria for the establishment of doctoral programmes) indicates in Art. 3 the accreditation procedure and requirements (timeframe for applications to MIUR, application modalities, accreditation criteria, renewal of the accreditation, roles of ANVUR and MIUR). Since 2013 ANVUR verifies that new PhD courses meet these requirements, with an annual follow-up to check the persistence of compliance to the requirements. The Ministry issues the relevant granting or refusal provisions to each requesting HEI, in the PhD-dedicated platform, based on ANVUR's proposal.

PhD programmes are assessed every year but certified every 5 years. If the yearly assessment shows that the requirements are not any longer met (for example due to a post replacement after a professor's retirement), the PhD programme is stopped (students already enrolled can finish the cycle).

According to MIUR guidelines, main requirements for accreditation are:

- The PhD board should include at least 16 Professors (including at most 1/4 of Assistant Professors) with a scientific specialization closely related with that of the course;
- PhD Board Members should be highly prestigious researchers in their field;
- For each PhD course a minimum number of scholarships should be available;
- For each PhD course, adequate funding for basic research activities should be available, together with adequate research facilities;
- Each PhD course should have post graduate teaching activities.

In order to give some figures, in 2017 ANVUR evaluated 952 dossiers, out of which 69 were requests for accreditation of new PhD courses (outcome: 8 negative and 61 positive), and the rest was constituted by the annual renewal of running PhD courses (outcome: 24 negative and 859 positive).

Evaluations are made sur-dossier by a committee of ANVUR's staff composed of 5 evaluation officers (permanent staff) and 3 evaluators (non-permanent contracted staff), coordinated by the area manager for research evaluation. There are no experts appointed that are external to the agency. The committee analyses all the proposals in detail, using the appropriate indicators and discussing relevant cases in internal

meetings. Subsequently, the resulting proposals for accreditation and non-accreditation of the programmes are submitted to ANVUR Governing Board for approval and transmitted to the Ministry. ANVUR's proposal for accreditation summarizes the fulfilment of each accreditation requirement (8 in total, articulated in various indicators, most of which quantitative) in a schematic format. These documents are not published, nor the comprehensive outcomes of this annual activity, in any form. They are handled to the Ministry for accreditation for its annual renewal.

Universities are allowed to ask for a re-examination of the ANVUR's decision, providing further information concerning the programme. In these cases, the same committee analyses the new documentation and reaches a definitive judgement that is again submitted to the ANVUR Board for the final approval. Results are transmitted to MIUR.

Instructions intended for HEIs (how to submit an application, who does what and time-frames, accreditation requirements) are laid out in the ministerial Decree nr. 45 of 8 February 2013 (the Regulations concerning the accreditation of the PhD programmes and criteria for the establishment of doctoral programmes). The document of 2017 called 'Guidelines' contains the detailed accreditation requirements and the criteria for the assessment of fulfilment of each requirement. These documents are published in ANVUR's website: <http://www.anvur.it/attivita/corsi-di-formazione-superiore/riferimenti-normativi/>

ANVUR'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In Art 2.3 of ANVUR Organizational Regulations, the international cooperation is explicitly mentioned: the agency collaborates, also through exchanges of experiences and information, with international and EU bodies, as well as with the agencies and administrations of the other countries and with the international scientific organizations, operating in the field of QA within HE and research.

The Italian legislation does not foresee the possibility for ANVUR to operate abroad. Representation in European or international networks, associations or working groups is however possible.

Globally, ANVUR's international activities are well established in the field of research, where the agency participates in a number of networks and working groups concerning research evaluation and performance-based research funding. ANVUR staff regularly participate to the main scientific conferences on research evaluation at international level.

Some senior officers are actively participating in activities, seminars and projects across the EHEA. It is relevant to mention:

- Participation to ENQA activities, projects and seminars (such as TeSLA project, ImpEA project);
- Collaboration with other QA agencies (such as AQU Catalunya, MusiQue, EQ-Arts);
- Participation to working groups established by the European Commission (CHEER II working groups for the Bologna follow-up process).

A broader international participation remains an ongoing strategic goal. For the time being, however, ANVUR has not set up an international relations unit due to the structure of the agency and the number of staff members that is defined by law.

ANVUR'S FUNDING

ANVUR is a public authority and, as such, bases all its activities on an established public funding. All of ANVUR's activities are free of charge, regardless if they concern public or private HEIs. In the period 2018-2020 the annual budget amounts to € 7.640.000. On the basis of the Presidential Decree n. 76/2010 funds are counted as a specific item in the Ministry annual budget allocation, thus this amount can only be modified by a parliamentary decision.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF ANVUR WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Evidence

ANVUR undertakes a large number of quality assurance activities on a yearly basis or periodically.

- Accreditation of new university programmes (since 2013): approx. 100 procedures per year;
- Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes – AVA system (1st round 2015-2020): on average 15-20 procedures per year, renewal every 5 years;
- Accreditation of PhD Programmes (since 2011): annually, with annual renewal, over 900 procedures per year;
- Initial accreditation of programmes in Art, Music and Dance – AFAM (since 2016): annually, approx. 50 programmes per year (1st degree cycle) and over 500 programmes since it started in 2018 (2nd degree cycle);
- Periodic accreditation of programmes in Art, Music and Dance – private AFAM institutions (since 2018): renewal after 1 and 3 years, then every 3 years, procedures at approx. 15 institutions yearly.

The activities' goals and objectives are laid down in the respective users' guidelines (all publicly available) and ANVUR's website. ANVUR has a publicly available mission statement (<http://www.anvur.it/en/agency/mission/>) where activities' objectives are globally summarized in its introducing statements:

The Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) oversees the national quality evaluation system for universities and research bodies. It is responsible for the quality assessment of the activities carried out by universities and research institutes, recipients of public funding. It is also entrusted with steering the Independent Evaluation Units' activities, and with assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of public funding programmes or incentive programmes for research and innovation activities.

The detailed operational goals of the agency are defined in ANVUR's three-year plans, which are also publicly available.

ANVUR involves stakeholders in its governance and work through the composition of the Governing Board and of the Advisory Board. The Governing Board is currently composed of 7 university professors, with longstanding teaching and research activities in different disciplines (AFAM disciplines excluded). They meet on a weekly basis with the Management Team and are constantly involved in all of ANVUR's activities, undertaking a primary role in the decision-making process. The Advisory Board, including all relevant national and international stakeholders (17 members in total), meets at least 2 times per year, convened by its Chairman, with the role of giving advises and making proposals to the Governing Board, in particular for

what concerns ANVUR's instruments and methodologies. It lasts in charge for 4 years and it is composed as follows:

- A member is appointed by CUN – National University Council;
- A member is appointed by CRUI – Board of Rectors of Italian Universities;
- Three members are appointed by CNSU – National Council of University Students;
- A member is appointed by CONPER – Conference of Public Research Institutes' Presidents;
- A member is appointed by the National Academy of the Lincei;
- Four members are appointed by CNEL – National Council for Economics and Labour;
- A member is appointed by the State-Regions, Cities and Local Autonomies unified Conference;
- A foreigner member and an Italian member appointed by ERC – European Research council;
- A foreigner member and an Italian member appointed by EUA – European University Association;
- A foreigner member and an Italian member appointed by ESIB – the National unions of students in Europe;
- A member appointed by CODAU – Conference of University Administrative Directors;
- A member appointed by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Secretary General.

Thematic working groups are regularly built and appointed to deal with specific issues closely linked to ANVUR's activities; they always include external relevant stakeholders (ref. Composition of working groups, publicly available, including individual CVs).

ANVUR's headquarters are close to the Ministry, facilitating meetings whenever necessary. Regular exchanges are indispensable, as all of ANVUR's activities are mandated by MIUR. ANVUR's representatives frequently participate to working groups organized by MIUR to examine specific issues on higher education. ANVUR participates in meetings of the Teaching committee of the Rectors Conference of the Italian Universities (CRUI), with vice-rectors for academic affairs. Recently, a new proposal for a homogeneous questionnaire for students on the evaluation of teaching was intensively discussed within that framework.

Analysis

Activities:

The public available mission statement encompasses the objectives of all ANVUR's activities, including explicitly: evaluating procedures; defining criteria and methodologies for the assessment of institutions and programmes with a view to their periodic accreditation by the Ministry; steering the assessment activities undertaken by universities' Independent Evaluation Units; drawing up the procedures for collecting and evaluating students' satisfaction with programmes (in cooperation with universities' Evaluation Units); providing benchmarks for public funds allocation at the request of the Minister; undertaking further assessment exercises, defining standard parameters and providing technical regulations at the request of the Minister. The objectives of regular external QA activities are clearly laid down in the introduction of the mission statement.

The high number of procedures undertaken annually by ANVUR is explained by the fact that only institutional and programme accreditation under the AVA system for universities is an external quality assurance activity involving, as the name of the system implies: *Autovalutazione, Valutazione Periodica e Accreditamento* (self-assessment, internal-external periodic evaluation, accreditation). It is a coherent and extended process with an own continuous and systematic evaluative approach, whose accreditation phase (once every 5 years) can last up to two years and is specifically designed aiming at direct linking internal with external QA very concretely.

All other activities are mostly done sur-dossier, in most cases do not imply an on-site visit nor the appointment of ad hoc panels of experts for individual programmes or institutions, and outcomes do not always result in a report (please see the description of ANVUR's activities under the introductory chapter).

This explains how over 900 PhD programme assessment procedures can possibly be carried out every year, and how the initial accreditation of 2nd cycle degrees at AFAM institutions could deal with over 500 programmes in a few months. In these two cases, all assessments were done by a single team of evaluators and coordinated by the relevant area/unit at ANVUR. Considering the accreditation of PhD programmes and its annual renewal runs since a few years, the assessment team is integrated in the internal ANVUR's structure, made of permanent and non-permanent staff. As for the accreditation of AFAM 2nd cycle degree programmes, ANVUR was mandated in 2018 by MIUR for the first time, with uncertainty about future mandates, which explains why ANVUR received a massive number of applications all at once. The AFAM Unit managed to build a core assessment team (High Committee of Experts) made of 7 members recruited from ANVUR's register of AFAM experts, and who worked in close cooperation with the AFAM staff in order to carry out the mandate in the set deadlines. These conditions do not allow for deep analytical assessments of each requesting programme. Results were loaded in an IT dedicated MIUR platform.

Although insecurity exists about future mandates for AFAM accreditations of 2nd cycle programmes – which falls out of ANVUR's responsibility –, the panel can confirm that ANVUR is gradually constituting a pole of expertise in this field, with highly competent and motivated staff, constantly in contact with the relevant stakeholders of the AFAM system and aiming at building an external QA system comparable to the one applied to the university system. Developments in this sense have already been witnessed in the comparison of the initial accreditation procedures at AFAM institutions of the 1st cycle degree and of the 2nd cycle degree, the latter including the yearly self-assessment reports of the NdV (internal evaluation units), written according to commonly agreed content criteria, representing the first step of the gradual building of a culture of quality.

Stakeholders involvement:

The panel finds that the Advisory Board is formally involved in the governance of ANVUR, though the expertise of the board is in practice not sufficiently exploited in developmental and decision oriented processes within the agency. Interviews carried out with the Management Team and with some of the Advisory Board's representatives do confirm that there is still a big potential in the efficient and meaningful consultation of the Advisory Board. Timing seems to be one of the obstacles, as often the documentation submitted for advice is already in a final phase, and some Board members find that the consultation is becoming then a pro-forma information. However, the management of ANVUR stresses the importance of getting the view from the board before finalizing new documents and concepts. Apart from its Governing Board, ANVUR involves informally various external stakeholders with outstanding QA experience, in the development of its instruments and methodologies. As a matter of facts, when documents reach the Advisory Board, they have been pre-screened – mainly through informal processes – by accountable experts in the field (be them members of the Governing Board or external partners).

In the view of the panel ANVUR could do more to actively involve stakeholders, such as the students, the professional organizations, some social partners, which are involved in the Advisory Board, but not represented in the Governing Board and are not necessarily consulted in more informal occasions.

Full employment of the Governing Board members, including their number and profile defined by law, can be seen as an obstacle to more directly involve other types of stakeholders in the Board and thereby give these stakeholders a more central position in the governance of ANVUR. The current Governing Board might evolve in the direction of a 'board of directors' acting as a strategic and decision-making board, and the permanent contract would probably not be adequate anymore. Today they represent the academic community, in the variety of the scientific fields, and it works very efficiently, with high commitment.

The panel notes an imbalance between people from within the Italian system and those from outside the system in the participation in governance structures. It looks like they are almost totally composed by Italian nationals, with the exception of designated members of the Advisory Board, despite the explicit mention in the law that applications from abroad are welcome, namely in the composition of the Governing Board. The review panel believes that more openness to perspectives from outside Italy would stimulate more self-reflection, engendering on the medium-term improvement mechanisms and therefore an increase of the international recognition of ANVUR with positive repercussions on the national accountability.

It seems imperative to address the lack of representatives from the AFAM system in both the Governing Board and the Advisory Board. This is also due to the fact that AFAM activities were introduced only recently (since 2016) and staff number and profiles are regulated by law (see analysis under standard 3.5). According to ANVUR's self-assessment report and the interviews conducted on-site, in 2017, the agency nominated a Working Group of QA experts from the AFAM sector to develop criteria for the implementation of internal quality assurance for institutions that would cover all standards in Part I of the ESG 2015. The working group also looks to the ENQA principles and to the procedures used by peer reviews of AEC (Association Européenne des Conservatoires). The panel notes that this working group concluded its activities in December 2017, according to the information published in the dedicated area of ANVUR's website. The main outcome of the group were the ANVUR guidelines for the preparation of the Annual Report of the Evaluation Units: "2017 General Criteria for the preparation of the annual report of the AFAM institutions evaluation units". The ESG, as well as AEC principles, are mentioned as reference. Considering the lack of representativeness from the AFAM sector in ANVUR's governing bodies, it would be highly beneficial to maintain active working groups with clear aims, ensuring continuity in the involvement of stakeholders in AFAM-related activities.

In conclusion, the review panel confirms that ANVUR ensures the involvement of stakeholders in its governance and work but stakeholders of the various activities are to a certain extent unevenly represented and the potential of their formal involvement is not yet fully exploited.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends to ANVUR's Management Team to explore ways enabling to increase the strategic involvement of the Advisory Board.

The panel recommends to plan a more systematic formal dialogue between ANVUR and specific stakeholders (students, professional organisations, social partners) to collect feedback to be effectively beneficial for its governance and work.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests to activate a working group with clear aims in the AFAM sector, as a possible channel ensuring continuity in the involvement of AFAM stakeholders as long as their representation is not yet formalized in ANVUR's boards.

The panel suggests ANVUR to open a reflection with MIUR aiming at finding ways enabling the integration of professionals with AFAM profiles in ANVUR's boards and guaranteeing a better planning of future ANVUR activities in this area, benefitting all actors involved in a gradual development of a culture of quality.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence

ANVUR is an independent public body whose organization was formally established by the Presidential Decree 76/2010, which gave execution to the Law 286/2006. In art. 2, comma 138 of the latter, the agency is assigned the following tasks: external evaluation of the quality of the activities of universities and public and private research institutions recipients of public funding, on the basis of an annual program approved by MIUR; address, coordination and supervision of the evaluation activities assigned to the internal

evaluation units of universities and research institutions; evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of public programs for financing and incentivizing research and innovation activities.

The Law 240/2010 and the Legislative Decree n. 19/2012 have formally introduced the QA system in the Italian higher education. According to this legislation, ANVUR oversees the national public QA system for public and private universities and institutions of higher educations and is responsible for the institutional and programme assessment and accreditation. Complying with this legislation, the Agency has developed its own assessment criteria, methodologies and procedures to fulfil its tasks.

In particular, according to Legislative Decree 27 January 2012, no. 19, through MIUR Decree 12 December 2016 no. 987, ANVUR must establish the criteria and methods to verify and define the indicators for the initial and periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes, which are communicated to the Ministry and come into force by MIUR decree.

Analysis

ANVUR has an established legal basis and is formally recognised as quality assurance agency by an official Decree of the President of the Italian Republic.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Evidence

Organizational independence

The independence of the agency's work from third parties (HEIs, government bodies, stakeholders' organizations) is set into Presidential Decree n. 76/2010 "The Agency has organizational, administrative and financial complete autonomy".

The procedure for the appointment of the Governing Board (made of 7 members according to the law) is meant to safeguard the independency of the Agency. A public call for appointment is opened, a short list of eligible candidates is made among all applicants and the Ministry selects members from the short list. The identification of candidates chosen in the short list is done by a Selection Committee whose composition is defined by law and includes 5 members nominated respectively by: the Minister, OSCE Secretary General, the President of the *Accademia dei Lincei*, the President of the European Research Council, the President of the National Student Union. The list remains valid for 2 years. The system foresees a rotation assuring that not all members end their mandate at the same time and some continuity is guaranteed. The law states a gender quota in the Governing Board composition and explicitly opens applications to foreign candidates. The Governing Board nominates the director, the process being fully independent from the ministries.

The mandate of Governing Board members forbiddens them to undertake any duty at universities that is under ANVUR scope of assessments, and they are not allowed to take third party commitments. They might be involved in research activity as far as it is unpaid and not under ANVUR assessment.

Composition and term of the Advisory Board are ruled by art. 11 of the Presidential Decree n. 76 of February, 1st 2010. The composition is laid down under standard 3.1. Members are nominated by the President of the Governing Board of ANVUR, under the proposal of the Governing Board.

Operational independence

All instruments and methodologies for the external QA assessments are developed autonomously by ANVUR within the scope of the legal mandate given, within the given allocation of human and financial resources (all defined by law), and within the given deadlines (set by MIUR or by the Governing Board). This implies some limitations due to the fact that permanent staff cannot increase in numbers (unless a parliamentary change of the law is made), and non-permanent staff can legally only be involved in assessment activities (QA technical profiles), and is obviously subject to ANVUR's financial annual plan. ANVUR is currently facing some challenges with the important increase of activities in the last few years and the inflexible number of staff units set by law.

In some of ANVUR's external QA activities (ex-ante accreditation of new programmes) deadlines of assessments are set by MIUR, which affects ANVUR's planning of its activities and the implementation time-frame of assessed programmes. Moreover, in the AFAM sector, namely for the initial accreditation of 2nd cycle degrees, mandates from MIUR are issued at a very short notice, meaning there is uncertainty about future mandates. This had an enormous impact on the operations of the agency, which had to be responsive to over 500 applications and undertake all assessments in a few months. Indeed, in 2018 AFAM institutions applied massively, not knowing if and when will be next opportunity.

External experts for ANVUR's assessments are selected from the public *Register of experts* by the Governing Board. Each nomination of a panel of experts is publicly available among the deliberations of the Governing Board. The appointment is based on the characteristics of the institution/structure/programme to be evaluated and on the competences and previous experience of the expert. The absence of conflict of interest is stated in the contracts stipulated between ANVUR and each expert. Experts listed in the register have all being recruited through public calls. Eligible applicants must follow an ANVUR training before they are listed. The register is annually updated. CVs and remunerations are made public for both internal staff and external experts.

In the Italian QA system (AVA) the evaluation units at HEIs (NdV) act as bridge between the HEIs and ANVUR. Since 2010, the law defines the NdV structure, made of internal and external components, with a majority of external people, who are not allowed to be rectors or holding high positions at their own universities, like being in the senate. This further assures the operational independence of NdVs and, by consequence the efficient and autonomous ANVUR-NdV relationships.

Independence of formal outcomes

For the evaluation procedures that involve external experts, results are presented in an official report. For the evaluation procedures that involve agency's staff members, results are presented in internal reports. The reports, for all assessment procedures, are presented to the Governing Board that has the responsibility to take a final independent decision. ANVUR's decisions are then transmitted to MIUR that has the responsibility for the final act. In the accreditation of universities and academic programmes (including PhD) the ministerial act has to be consistent with the decision taken by ANVUR. However, in justified cases MIUR has the possibility to ask for the revision of an evaluation; in this case, ANVUR may conduct a new assessment, appointing a different panel of experts. In the AFAM procedures, legislation does not explicitly constrain MIUR's acts, but they have so far been systematically consistent with ANVUR's proposals.

ANVUR's Code of Ethics emphasizes the independent role and unconstrained decision-making of the agency; the Code applies to the Governing Board, to the Director and staff, as well as to all external experts.

Analysis

In 2010 the HEI system was reformed. The way to finance universities was one of the points touched by the reform, particularly relevant in a system with mostly public institutions (only 2 catholic HEIs and a couple financed by regional authorities). For the first time financing was related to quality, in this case the quality of research, with a need to establish an agency, following the principle that the agency had to be completely independent from the ministry.

As a matter of fact, the Italian legislation stipulates the independence of the agency explicitly. The nomination procedure of the Governing Board and of the President confirm ANVUR has the statute of a full independent authority. However, it should be mentioned that the close regulation of ANVUR activities makes it sometimes difficult for ANVUR to implement changes by its own.

The panel is very confident that ANVUR ensures the establishment of the criteria and procedures and the issuance of decisions in a way that is totally independent from the universities and government.

Nevertheless, financial restrictions and the time-frame of some mandates have an influence on ANVUR's operations. Deadlines set by MIUR make it difficult for ANVUR to organize its procedures in an optimal and efficient way. For example, there are more than a hundred proposals for new study programmes that are assessed by Committees of Experts appointed by ANVUR every year. The deadline for the evaluations is set by MIUR every year in early June. The period of assessment is relatively tight. It leaves a very short time to the universities to implement the accredited programmes, which start in October. The AFAM peculiarity described above (under "Evidence") represents another example in which MIUR and ANVUR operations are not sufficiently aligned, with implications at the expense of the quality of procedures. ANVUR was given full autonomy in how to handle the critical peak of work and managed to fulfil the mandate independently. However, this is far from being "ideal premises for qualitative work".

ANVUR should be put in the conditions of being able to anticipate and optimally plan its activities in the short and medium term. The panel believes that the authority to set the deadlines for ANVUR assessments should be delegated to the Governing Board of ANVUR.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends ANVUR to strive for more autonomy in setting the timetable and therefore define the procedures more freely (particularly in AFAM accreditations) aiming at improving the quality and meaningfulness of the external quality activities.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests to the management Board to increase the flow of information and regular exchange with MIUR in order to be put in the condition of being able to anticipate and better plan its activities in the short and medium term.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Evidence

In the course of its work, ANVUR gains information on programmes and institutions, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system, useful beyond the scope of a single process. These findings result every 2 years in the Biannual report on the Italian HE system (*Rapporto biennale sullo stato del Sistema universitario e della ricerca*). The Biannual report represents a major source of information in the Italian system with statistical data on all aspects of teaching and research, thanks to the regular collection of data throughout ANVUR's external QA activities within research and HE. It contains both data and analyses. The 2018 biannual report, published on ANVUR's website, is available in its full version (over 600 pages) or in its synthetic version (86 pages).

There are dedicated chapters to the external QA activities of ANVUR in the frame of universities, research and AFAM institutions. Results of new practices, trends, projects and thematic analysis receive special attention, particularly under Part III named “Insights”. The 2018 edition contains impact studies on the introduction of new or different evaluation methodologies, such as the “Third mission” evaluation, the 2017 revision of the AVA system, or the performance-based evaluation of research. A specific chapter focusses on QA, on the results of the nationally established surveys to students and the ongoing TECO project, aiming at defining learning outcomes indicators in all disciplines, and be used to revise the current data collection at study programme level.

The report is based on data annually collected by ANVUR by the AVA, AFAM and research units. The Italian QA system foresees that the independent evaluation units within HEIs (NdV) report annually to ANVUR, based on aggregated and homogeneous internal data collection at institutional and programme level. ANVUR performs an enormous work in processing and analysing all this information, on an annual basis. The edition of the Biannual report is mainly under the responsibility of ANVUR’s director.

In addition to the Biannual report, which constitutes a comprehensive source of all concluded and ongoing projects and self-reflection of ANVUR, thematic working groups within the agency are constituted according to emerging needs, normally chaired by Governing Board members, and they involve members from the relevant external stakeholders. Information on active and concluded working groups (theme, timeframe, aims, composition, methodology, outcomes) are available in a dedicated section of ANVUR’s website at <http://www.anvur.it/anvur/gruppi-di-lavoro/>. Some examples of active and concluded groups are: “Budget and Performance” (2018, active), “TeMI – Third mission and Social impact” (2017, active), “Criteria for the preparation of the AFAM NdV Reports” (2017, concluded), “Evaluation in Humanistic, Juridical and Social Areas” (2014, concluded), “Evaluation criteria of AFAM institutions” (2013, concluded). Working groups are all formally instituted by official deliberations of the Governing Board.

Analysis

The Biannual report contributes to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts. It shows developments, trends and areas of good practice or difficulty. It provides regular updates on the status of higher education and represents a very useful source of information for both institutions and students as well as the general public. On the opinion of the panel, it represents an example of good practice in how to make use of and disseminate the information gathered by an agency in the course of its work.

The information given in the biannual report is partly informative or descriptive and partly analytical. For example, it analyses the difficulties encountered in the development of the TECO project, the limits of previous model experimentations, the way a new model was defined and how it is planned to be tested before the implementation. To give a second example, the chapter on students’ surveys analyses all pros and cons of the methods introduced since 2013, their limitations and consequent constant improvement, in order to maximize the usefulness and meaningfulness of results in the internal QA system.

The report is not self-referential, as all analysis contained is supported by international bibliography and, if applicable, is benchmarked with international practices and evaluated against international studies. Its statistical and analytical approach make it a highly useful document for very different stakeholders, be them QA actors within HEIs, students, actors of the labour market or legislators. It is publicly available in its integral or synthetic version, or dived per chapters, in order to ease accessibility and readability, according to the different needs. Just to give an example, as the Biannual report was published, it showed that the number of professors was globally decreasing and the Ministry opened new positions as professors.

The AFAM sector having been introduced only recently to external QA, it has not yet produced outcomes of thematic analysis. This will need to be developed and implemented.

The panel noted heterogeneity in handling information on working groups' outcomes in ANVUR's website. Not all activities of the working groups resulted in reports and not all reports are publicly available. The panel was given existing reports during the on-site visit.

Panel commendation

The panel notes that the Biannual report is the only systemic and reliable statistical and analytical source of information in Italy on HE and research, under the full responsibility of ANVUR. It represents an example of good practice in how to make use of and disseminate the information gathered by an agency in the course of its work.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends the systematic publication of the outcomes resulting from thematic working groups' activities conducted by ANVUR.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Evidence

Human resources

ANVUR has a relatively small permanent team (35 people for 97 universities and 155 AFAM institutions), supported by 13 non-permanent staff.

The 2017 national budget law (Law 232, December 2016), while recognizing ANVUR's difficulties in carrying on its activities with limited funds and staff, significantly strengthened the agency, in terms of both human and financial resources. The Agency permanent staff has been increased from 18 to 35 units; financial resources have also been increased taking into account the new employees.

The staff of the agency has been selected by public calls, which follows procedures defined by the Italian legislation for Civil Servants. The remuneration of staff is also defined by law and it is in line with that of the staff in Italian Government Departments (Ministries). A committee for the selection process is appointed by the Governing Board and it is composed by 1 full professor and 2 other professors (assistant or full), all external. For permanent staff ANVUR does not have a say in the hiring process, except the definition of the profile. For non-permanent staff the area managers (research or university) are also present in the selection commission and have a say.

The permanent staff includes: 3 managers; 19 "evaluator/technical officers"; 13 administrative employees. According to recent legal provisions, the profile of non-permanent staff (fixed-term employment contracts) must match the profile of evaluators/technical officers. This profile requires competences to deal with complex problems, the ability to define new evaluation procedures or to develop and improve those already in action, interacting with academic professors, researchers and HE managers. 90% of evaluator/technical officers have a PhD and experience in academic and research work. One IT specialist was previously recruited as non-permanent staff. The function of communication officer has been outsourced to an outside service. Currently fixed-term contracts are allowed only until the end of 2018, though the deadline has been moved forward several times, and is expected to be so again.

ANVUR staff updates its professional skills by attending conferences, seminars and training courses. 1.2% of the budget is allocated for this purpose.

According to ANVUR annual budget forecast, some essential functions are still missing: an ICT officer, a communication officer, a statistical officer, an expert in accounting and finance. These cannot be recruited as non-permanent staff (the profile doesn't match), nor as permanent staff (the profile and number of staff is defined by law).

The AFAM accreditation system was introduced in 2016, despite the challenging HR conditions. Although the situation has significantly improved in 2017, the external QA format for AFAM programmes was designed to match what could possibly be done within the mandate given by legislation, striving to adhere as much as possible to ESG principles. Despite the intentions, it was not always possible to fulfill the ambitions set for the external QA. For example, students were not involved as experts, although their involvement is planned in the near future.

On the other hand, the last AVA model applied at universities and academic programmes has been fully designed in the spirit of the ESG, aiming at developing a solid quality culture within the Italian HE landscape.

Financial resources

In the period 2018-2020 annual resources of ANVUR are stable at € 7.640.000. On the basis of a law (Presidential Decree n. 76/2010), funds are counted as a specific item in the Ministry annual budget allocation, thus this amount can only be modified by a Parliamentary decision. There are no other sources of income. All external QA procedures are free of charge.

ANVUR's current annual budget is already the result of a modification, which was a chance for ANVUR to obtain a considerable increase in budget, compared to the previous years. It is not imaginable to obtain an additional modification in the short run.

Most of the budget (48%) goes to ANVUR staff expenses (excluding compensation of experts). Globally, 18% of the budget goes to the operating costs of the Governing Board members.

IT equipment is allocated 2% of the budget. Training of permanent staff (competences, skills, knowledge) is allocated 1.2% of the budget.

The Agency has its offices in a central location in Rome, easily accessible by public transport and close to MIUR. There are various meeting rooms with electronic equipment for presentations (projectors, TV, microphones). A set of laptops and cameras for video conferences are available to all the staff and external experts. These facilities cost approximately 8% of the budget.

Analysis

In the view of the panel, the resources of ANVUR enable the agency to organise and run its external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner. The resources enable ANVUR to improve, to reflect on its practices and to inform the public about its activities.

However, the panel questions itself on the meaningfulness of external QA activities such as those conducted at 2nd cycle degree programmes at AFAM institutions, where the number of applications to be processed in a very short period of time only allows for verifications which cannot fully cover the aims of the ESG. For resource reasons, ANVUR could only rely on very limited permanent staff for this huge assessment work, which creates a vulnerable situation, also affecting the internal quality assurance principles. There is no doubt that the AFAM unit carried out the assessments in a professional and very efficient manner. However, the methodology had to match the available resources in the given conditions. No site-visits were conducted in this round, and the massive number of applications was assessed by a core assessment team (High Committee of Experts) made of 7 members recruited from ANVUR's register of AFAM experts, and who worked in close cooperation with the AFAM staff in order to carry out the mandate in the set deadlines.

The review panel believes that ANVUR staff with an AFAM-profile orientation needs to be reinforced, in view of the consolidating role ANVUR is gradually establishing also in this area. ANVUR is considering strengthening the cooperation with European professional bodies such as MusiQuE, benefitting from their external QA discipline-based expertise and resources.

The panel shares the view expressed in ANVUR's self-assessment report that there is an imbalance between the number of permanent staff and the number and scope of tasks assigned to the agency. This imbalance is handled through hiring staff on fixed-term contracts, which risks to challenge the professionalism and efficiency of the agency. Concerns do touch transversally all of ANVUR activities and not only the AFAM unit. There seems to be a particular need for qualified professionals to enhance the use of software applications and to provide support to all of the agency's activities.

There also seems to be a need to deal with budget more strategically and to establish priorities with regard to the development of processes and procedures. New sustainable strategies to cope with these challenges shall be discussed with the competent authorities. The organizational structure of the agency might need to be rethought in view of the challenges ANVUR is currently facing and the ones to come (fixed-term contracts in principle are allowed only until the end of 2018). In particular, the Governing Board, although playing an important role in the current structure, represents a significant cost for the agency and might deserve a revision of its function, composition and mandate. According to ANVUR's President, the current Governing Board structure was adequate when the system had to be developed. It deserves a reflection on how this structure could develop in the years to come.

ANVUR might also consider to apply fees on procedures involving private HEIs. In addition to that, ANVUR shall continue to strive for the renewal of the right to hire non-permanent staff, with longer terms whenever legally possible, as a security measure allowing to continue carrying out its regular activities.

Finally, the panel wishes to underline that the last AVA model applied at universities and academic programmes is conceived with very high qualitative ambitions which are basically met in the implementation, despite the limited resources. The panel has been impressed by the ambitions that ANVUR shows in reaching the highest possible quality of work, despite the challenges in terms of resources, assuring coherence and accountability in a system fit for the purpose.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends to establish priorities with regards to the development of meaningful processes and procedures, compatible with the available resources.

The panel also recommends to open a reflection on the revision of the organizational structure of the agency, including an evaluation about to what extent – in a medium to long term perspective – it would still be considered the most optimal use of resources to reserve a relatively large percentage of the budget to the full-time engagement of the governing board members.

The panel recommends finally to enhance IT resources for the use of software applications and to provide support to all of the agency's activities.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests to continue to strive for increasing its staff units on permanent or long-term contracts and for the renewal of the right to hire non-permanent staff, with longer terms whenever legally possible, as a security measure allowing to continue carrying out its regular activities.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Evidence

ANVUR commits itself to carry out its activities fully respecting its Code of Ethics and core values published in its mission: independence, transparency, clarity, respect and trust.

Internal QA is set down in a comprehensive set of documents which describe processes, responsibilities and codes of behaviour for every profile and role within the agency. These documents are all published on ANVUR's website. Among those, it is important to mention:

- ANVUR's Code of Ethics, approved by the Governing Board on 15 October 2014;
- Regulations concerning the organization and functioning of the Agency, which specifies the organization rules and the competences of the different ANVUR's bodies.
- Regulation of the Agency's staff, which describes the rights and obligations of the permanent and temporary staff of ANVUR, according to the different profiles and roles within it, and following the current legislation.
- The Personnel Behavioural Code, which describes the duties that the permanent staff is required to observe, in order to act with care, loyalty, impartiality and good conduct. This Code integrates the national code of conduct for public employees adopted in the Presidential Decree 62/2013.
- The Three-year plan for transparency and integrity, which describes the existing and intended initiatives promoting transparency, legality and the culture of integrity within ANVUR.

Minutes of all formal Governing Board and Advisory Board meetings are publicly available, as well as all the deliberations of the Governing Board. Informal staff meetings are conducted within ANVUR's areas and units. Meetings are called by heads of unit, by area managers or by the director. During these meetings issues and future developments are discussed. Sometimes external stakeholders are involved in meetings, too. ANVUR staff participate in international QA events in order to benchmarking the agency's internal QA. Before the approval and adoption of new guidelines and instruments, public consultations are regularly opened in the ANVUR website, collecting external feedback.

For what concerns human resources, transparency is assured as well through publicly available CVs and remuneration levels for all internal and external staff, all recruited via public calls.

All experts listed in ANVUR's Register or pool of eligible reviewers for external assessments activities, are recruited through public calls, available in ANVUR website, and have followed a training. Mandates are assigned to experts by the Director of ANVUR, after an official deliberation of the Governing Board (publicly available), with the stipulation of a contract and according to criteria that are meant to ensure compliance with the principles of independence, impartiality in the performance of the requested service, rotation and the absence of causes of incompatibility and conflicts of interest at the moment of conferment. The Governing Board annually verifies the activity of evaluation of the experts and confirms renewal of their eligibility (enrolment in the Register).

According to the provisions of the agency's Code of Ethics, experts must operate with rigour and professionalism and respect professional secrecy before, during and after the on-site visit. They are not to release information about decisions to be taken and measures relating to proceedings in progress before they have been officially approved. They are to maintain the strictest confidentiality on all information that comes to their knowledge during their mandate. Based on art. 5 of the Experts Regulations, experts who hold the office of Rector in any Italian University, experts who in the last five years have been members of the Independent Evaluation Unit or have been in service or have had teaching contracts or have relatives up to the second grade or similar in service at the University under accreditation, are excluded from the

assessment panel. Furthermore, members of the Academic Senate of State Universities (Law no. 240/2010, Article 1, paragraph 2, letter s) are excluded from ANVUR assessment function.

The training of the experts is pre-condition to be eligible for ANVUR's assessment procedures and be listed in the Register. There are separate trainings for separate categories of experts: system experts (institutional assessments), discipline experts (programme assessments), student experts, experts in online educational provisions, AFAM experts. Trainings last normally 2 days and are supported by a briefing package. Experts that have already collaborated with ANVUR do take active parts in the training process and regularly make suggestions for the enhancement of the quality of trainings, which are implemented in the successive training sessions.

Experts are given procedural guides and templates for their reports. The same goes for ANVUR staff, who writes reports based on own templates and who are internally trained for their technical support tasks, in particular non-permanent staff. At least a second staff member and a Governing Board member always reads reports (and make enhancement proposals) before reports are approved in official meetings of the Governing Board.

Role of the President: according to Art 2.k and Art. 3 of the ANVUR Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017), the President ensures the impartiality, reliability and transparency of the evaluations. The President guarantees the transparency of the Agency's activities, making the results of the analysis and evaluations public and any other information also through the Agency's own website. The office of President is full-time and is incompatible with any employment relationship, direct or indirect, even free of charge, established with the institutions assessed. The President may carry out research and publish the results of such activities only free of charge, and provided they are not assessed by the Agency.

Role of the Governing Board: according to Art 6 of the ANVUR Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017), Governing Board members are 7 full time employees whose function is incompatible with any employment relationship with the institutions assessed, be it direct or indirect, even if not remunerated. Board members may carry out research and publish the results of these activities only if free of charge, and provided they are not subject to an evaluation by the agency. The Board determines the agency's governance and strategic directions on the basis of an annual plan, also defining the criteria, methods and timing of the evaluation activities. The Board monitors annually the agency's assessment activities. It is ANVUR's decision-making body. It meets at least every 15 days and minutes are held for all meetings. The deliberations of the Board are publicly available.

Each decision is prepared in advance by one Governing Board member who analyses the whole documentation, and if needed, asking clarifications to the staff member in charge or to the chair of the expert panel. In this process, particular attention is given to the quality of the reports and their consistency.

Role of the Advisory Board: This board is set to play an internal QA role, giving advice and making proposals on ANVUR activities. Art. 10 of the Advisory Board Regulation of 18.07.2012 rules incompatibilities and conflict of interest clauses: members of the Advisory Board cannot belong to the operative structures of ANVUR. The participation to bodies and collective bodies of research societies and national/international universities is not to be considered as a hallmark of incompatibility. It is anyway task of each of the members of the Advisory Board to periodically inform the Chairman (who then reports to the Governing Board) about any overlapping task, appointment, collaboration or office.

Role of the Director: according to Art. 10.3.i and 10.3.q of the ANVUR Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017) the Director prepares half-yearly reports on the management performance of the 3 areas, identifying any deviations and possible remedies and promptly informs the President about any significant management problems. The Director ensures the agency's feedback to the national dispositions on administrative transparency, document management, centralization of archives, conservation and access to information and data. He-she is responsible for the elaboration of the annual activity plan, which,

according to Art. 17.4, defines the development lines of the assessment activities of the agency, taking into account, in particular, the previous experience and the planned evaluation objectives. Art 4-5 foresee that the function of Director is incompatible with other public or private offices, including electives, with the exercise of professional, commercial or industrial activities and with the office of director or statutory auditor of companies. The Director may not hold other public offices of any kind, nor have direct or indirect interests in universities and research institutions.

Role of the Board of Auditors: it verifies the administrative performance and the accounting regularity.

Role of the 3 Area Managers: according to Art. 12.d-e of the ANVUR Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017) the managers of each of the 3 Areas according to the organizational structure of ANVUR (higher education, research, administration) elaborate and transmit to the Director a report on the results of the activities, in relation to the programmatic objectives, and on the results achieved; they draw up a self-evaluation report of the activities of the Area and transmit it to the Director.

Role of working groups: thematic working groups are formally launched by Governing Board members in order to investigate, analyse and report on aspects directly related to ANVUR's external QA activities. These lead to issuing new or revised instruments, pilots, new or revised methodologies, all aiming at quality enhancement. Minutes of meetings are available, although not published.

Example 1: Two years after its launch, ANVUR, in close collaboration with the Rectors' Conference (CRUI), initiated a reflection on its experience, aiming at enhancing the strengths of the AVA system, at filling in the gaps and weaknesses, at modifying or removing the less effective and productive aspects. ANVUR has established a Working Group made up of representatives of the academic world, with different roles and responsibilities in QA assessment and processes. In its joint analysis, the AVA system review had the main goal of significantly simplifying the system, reducing the burden to universities, complying with the ESG 2015 European standards more effectively, while maintaining the founding objectives.

Example 2: the ongoing project to improve students' opinions questionnaires and the way data is collected, in collaboration with the National Student Union, aiming at assuring homogeneity in handling comparable and useful results for the enhancement of the teaching and learning activities at programme level.

Example 3: annual reports of the NdV at AFAM institutions were highly heterogenous and AFAM institutions needed support. ANVUR launched a process with AFAM stakeholders and the AFAM unit, which resulted in the Guidelines for the NdV annual reports, an instrument that enhanced the quality of reports and, by consequence, the external quality assessments undertaken by ANVUR.

Analysis

The panel finds that ANVUR is committed to constantly verify that its activities follow its core values: independence, transparency, rigour, fairness, respect and trust. Its Code of Ethics applies to the Governing Board, to the staff of the agency and to the external experts who participate to ANVUR activities. Every job description (staff, experts) includes a no-disclosure clause. Board members, staff members and external experts sign no-conflict-of-interest statements and commit, among others, not to exploit their position to pursue personal aims and not to accept any kind of present by evaluated institutions or individuals. Contracts between ANVUR and panel experts foresee no contacts between experts and HEIs.

More generally, the review panel confirms that the Agency constantly strives to improve its work reacting very effectively to external suggestions or on the basis of regular reviews of its activities. The Governing Board and the dedicated working groups play a key role in quality self-reflection and enhancement, whereas the role of the Advisory Board still seems somewhat unexploited, as explained under standard 3.1. Although formal processes for internal quality assurance are in place, informal processes still tend to prevail in gathering external feedback. In this area, a specific IQA system following an explicit IQA policy, aiming at

formalizing processes assuring that external feedback mechanisms lead to a continuous improvement within the agency is still missing. On the other hand, there are clearly assigned responsibilities within IQA for all managing staff. Examples do show a culture seeking continuous improvement with concrete results. According to the review panel, a systematic approach for the formal collection of external feedback and how it is taken into account needs to be introduced.

This would have a positive impact, for example, on the online open consultations, regularly carried out by ANVUR to collect feedbacks on its instruments, before their adoption. Interviewing external stakeholders, it seems ANVUR still lacks explicit internal mechanisms to consider and implement the external feedbacks collected. Documents, for instance new draft guidelines, might still remain very close to the original versions after the consultation process, as some stakeholders pointed out during the interviews. An accurate and transparent response from ANVUR to the points raised in the open consultations might improve the dialogue and mutual understanding. ANVUR should re-consider the aims and timing of these public consultations and explore new formal ways of involving all key stakeholders more proactively, enabling to effectively consider all perspectives in designing and implementing external QA activities.

The panel finds the Governing Board is playing a very positive role in quality assuring the assessment reports and their consistency, also thanks to well-developed internal accompanying instruments.

Alltogether, in the opinion of the review panel, the internal processes described under 'evidence' aiming at defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of ANVUR activities are appropriate and well functioning, fully respecting the agency's core values. The introduction of an explicit system aiming at formalizing an external feedback mechanism represents an enhancement area that would further strengthen ANVUR's positioning in the Italian HE landscape and beyond.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends to introduce a system aiming at formalizing processes assuring that external feedback is collected systematically and leads to a continuous improvement within the agency.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Evidence

According to Art.2.3 of ANVUR regulations, ANVUR operates in accordance with the European agreements in the frame of the EHEA. Art. 2.5 of ANVUR regulations explicitly foresees periodical international external reviews of ANVUR activities and its integration in the international QA context within HE and research. This is ANVUR's first external review against the ESG, the AVA system having been launched in 2015 as core external QA activity explicitly designed in the spirit of the ESG.

Analysis

Being ANVUR first external review against the ESG, cyclical evaluations of this kind can by definition not yet have taken place.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Evidence

The self-assessment report provides an overview (see Table 1) of how ESG part 1 is integrated in accreditations in the AVA system (periodic accreditation of institutions; initial and periodic accreditation of study programmes). Considering these procedures were designed specifically following the ESG, as explicitly mandated by law, one-to-one adherence was intended.

Overall, in order to implement policies consistent with its objectives, the university defines the roles, responsibilities and tasks of the governing bodies and structures responsible for the internal QA. It then defines an organisational structure to perform its functions effectively and an internal communication system that takes into account all key QA players, such as PQA, CPDS and NdV. The Institution also monitors the policies and a consequent critical review of the internal QA (tasks, functions and responsibilities), through analysis of the information gathered at the various levels by the organisations responsible for QA. Requirements must be applicable to various different contexts; this is why the AVA system does not provide stringent organisational requirements but asks for effective and transparent processes that involve the QA key players (PQA, CPDS, NdV).

For the remaining ANVUR activities the evidence of the adherence with Part 1 of the ESG was not provided. ANVUR explained that the legislation assigning these mandates did not refer to the ESG and activities were therefore designed in order to fulfil the mandate given. The review panel has therefore extrapolated by its own the information needed from the available sources and chose to offer its comments exclusively under the 'analysis' section.

According to ANVUR's self-assessment report and the interviews conducted onsite, in 2017 the agency nominated a Working Group of QA experts from the AFAM sector to develop criteria for the implementation of internal quality assurance for institutions that would cover all standards in Part I of the ESG. The working group also looks to the ENQA principles and to the procedures used by peer reviews of AEC (Association Européenne des Conservatoires). The effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG are being evaluated by the agency, starting from the analysis of the annual self-evaluation report of the institutional NdV.

Table 1 – Correspondance between Part 1 of the ESG and the AVA assessment criteria

ESG - Part 1		Accreditation of new University programmes	Periodic assessment of accredited University and programmes
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Indicator R3.A	Indicator R1.A; focus point R3.A.1
1.2	Design and approval of programmes	Indicator R3.A	Indicator R1.B; R3.A
1.3	Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Focus point R3.B.3	Focus points R1.A.3, R1.A.4, R1.B.1, R1.B.3; all Indicator R1.T; R3.B.1; R3.B.3
1.4	Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Focus points R3.B.2; R3.B.5	Focus points R1.B.1; R3.B.2; R3.B.5
1.5	Teaching staff	Focus point R3.C.1	Focus points R1.C.1; R3.C.1
1.6	Learning resources and student support	Focus points R3.C.2; R3.C.T	Focus points R1.C.2; R3.C.2; R3.C.T
1.7	Information management	Focus point R3.D.1	Focus points R1.A.3; R2.A.1; R3.D.1
1.8	Public information		Focus point R1.B.2
1.9	On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	Focus points R3.D.1; R3.D.3	Focus points R1.B.3; R1.C.3; R2.B.1; R3.D.1; R3.D.3
1.10	Cyclical external quality assurance	not applicable (first accreditation)	Mandatory by law

Analysis

Periodic accreditation of HEIs (AVA):

The panel finds that the external quality assurance in a strong way refers and is linked to the internal QA standards. The evaluation procedure that is carried out in the accreditation process has clearly the aim to verify the establishment of an effective internal QA system that shows to be efficient at the institutional level and its sub-units (departments and study programmes, based on a sample percentage). The panel can confirm that the external QA verifies in particular that:

- the institution possesses, declares and implements a vision of the teaching and research quality, adopting appropriate strategies, policies and procedures to implement it and distributes responsibilities and tasks within the organisation;
- the institution adopts adequate policies for the study programmes planning, updating and reviewing, in line with Part 1 of the ESG;
- the institution develops criteria to guarantee the qualification of teaching personnel, the teaching load sustainability and has the human and structural resources to support institutional activities;

- the institution has an effective internal QA system, which is adequate to monitor the study programmes and to make sure that processes and results are periodically self-assessed and evaluated, in line with Part 1 of the ESG;
- by adopting appropriate policies, the institution has developed a transparent overall strategy for the development, incentive and monitoring of research and third mission activities;
- the overall strategy is well known by the university staff and is clear, public and transparent.

The panel therefore concludes that ANVUR fully integrates Part 1 of the ESG in its institutional accreditation procedures.

Initial and periodic accreditation of academic programmes (AVA):

The panel finds that the evaluation procedure clearly refers to the internal QA work of the institutions and has the aim to verify that each study programme:

- clearly defines the cultural and professional profiles and provides consistent education activities;
- promotes student-centered teaching and learning, encouraging up-to-date and flexible teaching methods;
- has adequate teaching and administrative staff;
- offers services that are accessible and facilities suitable for teaching and learning needs;
- has the capacity to recognize critical issues, to define adequate solutions and to implement consequent measures for the continuous improvement of its teaching & learning activities;
- is integrated in the institutional internal QA system.

Moreover, the evaluation procedure verifies if and how the selected departments have implemented an internal QA system that reflects the institutional vision (strategies and policies) regarding research and third mission activities.

Annual internal reports on the HEI and its sub-units (each study programme) are delivered from the NdV to ANVUR, thanks to the mechanisms described under the introductory chapter of this review report. Annual NdV reports do contain follow-up information on each study programme, based on Part 1 of the ESG.

The panel therefore concludes that ANVUR integrates Part 1 of the ESG in its new programme accreditation procedures.

Accreditation of AFAM programmes:

Although not legally required by the law, the panel finds that AFAM procedures do consider to some extent Part 1 of the ESG, in so far as they assess, besides resources (financial, human, material-infrastructure):

- the Annual Report of the Independent Evaluation Units (NdV), transmitted by March 31st of each year;
- Admission criteria;
- Didactic Calendar: articulation of the didactic calendar (eventual organization in semesters, number of weeks of semester duration, number of exam sessions);
- Services for students: reception (accommodation, canteen, cultural activities, etc.), support during the training course (orientation in entry, in itinere and outgoing, internship placement, employment), support for foreign students (management of practices connected to incoming mobility, support in finding accommodation, etc.);
- Internationalization: mobility of students, teachers, and administrative technical staff; existing bilateral agreements and ongoing international cooperation and exchange projects; possible workshops, seminars and similar initiatives for teachers and students for the development of internationalization;
- Self-assessment: with reference to the survey of students' opinions (results of the survey, methodology and questionnaires used) and to the internal self-assessment report (last two NdV Reports);

- Artistic / scientific research: institutional strategy for the development of artistic / scientific research; support policies, organization and enhancement of personnel engaged in research activities; project selection protocols and procedures; existing and / or developing infrastructures, and their efficiency in support of the planned research activities; partnership / cooperation agreements stipulated with external parties, including international ones, which include specific research development objectives; results achieved in the academic year under consideration, also with reference to any awards, calls and / or prizes won; impact of research activities, especially in terms of internal innovation;
- Scientific and / or artistic production: institutional guidelines on production; usable spaces and their adequacy with respect to planned initiatives; external agreements and partnership / cooperation agreements in place that include specific objectives of artistic production; production activities (such as live show, recording, exhibition, etc.); methods of implementation (self-produced event, in collaboration, etc.); diffusion domain (local, national, international, digital, etc.); recipients (internal public, external, schools, etc.); awards or prizes obtained; impact that the activities of artistic extra-curricular production have on the study paths and their balancing with respect to the students' curricular obligations;
- Third mission: guidelines, with possible reporting of structures, bodies and internal procedures specifically dedicated to the development of the third mission; description of agreements and collaborations structured with the productive, economic, political and social world that include common objectives of the third mission; ongoing projects (beneficiaries, intervention context, expected costs and results);
- relationships with other AFAM institutions, with universities or with public and / or private bodies (official and valid documents relating to protocols, conventions, etc.).

ESG 1.1 Policy for QA: thanks to ANVUR's development of Guidelines for the NdV IQA reports at AFAM institutions, and due to the fact that NdV reports constitutes integral part of the assessed documentation, the ESG 1.1 is gradually being implemented.

ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes: this is dealt with at national legislative level, strictly defined in legislative acts. The AFAM system itself responds to the government mandate for programme approval.

ESG 1.3 Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment: still to be implemented.

ESG 1.4 Students admission, progression, recognition and certification: effectively addressed under AFAM accreditation system.

ESG 1.5 Teaching staff: effectively addressed under AFAM accreditation system.

ESG 1.6 Learning resources and students support: effectively addressed under AFAM accreditation system.

ESG 1.7 Information management: assured through the NdV annual collection of data and reporting system.

ESG 1.8 Public information: still to be explicitly implemented.

ESG 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: integrated in the AFAM periodic accreditation system, and explicitly implemented through annual reporting from the NdV to ANVUR. Effectiveness still to be gradually implemented.

ESG 1.10 Cyclical external QA: integrated in the AFAM periodic accreditation system, although the external QA processes are still to be adapted in order to be considered fully in line with the ESG.

The overall view of the panel is that ANVUR partially integrates Part 1 of the ESG in its AFAM accreditation procedures. The panel is confident that current efforts in the development of AFAM internal QA procedures could result in a full consideration of the European requirements in this field, as well as the specificities of the artistic disciplines.

Accreditation of PhD programmes:

The design of this activity was developed in order to fulfil the legal mandate, which does not take the ESG into account. Nevertheless, the panel finds that this activity indirectly considers single standards of Part 1 of the ESG:

ESG 1.1 Policy for QA: indirectly assured through the institutional internal QA within the AVA system, which applies to all academic and research institutions.

ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes: this is dealt with at national legislative level, strictly defined in legislative acts. ANVUR's system for the accreditation of PhD programmes responds to the government mandate for programme authorization.

ESG 1.3 Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment: still to be implemented.

ESG 1.4 Students admission, progression, recognition and certification: still to be implemented.

ESG 1.5 Teaching staff: effectively addressed.

ESG 1.6 Learning resources and students support: partially addressed.

ESG 1.7 Information management: assured through the ministerial annual collection of data.

ESG 1.8 Public information: still to be explicitly implemented.

ESG 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: partially assured through the ministerial annual collection of data.

ESG 1.10 Cyclical external QA: integrated in the developed accreditation system, with an accreditation procedure every 5 years, and an annual verification of the subsistence of the fulfilment of the accreditation requirements, although the external QA processes are still to be adapted in order to be considered fully in line with the ESG.

The overall view of the panel is that ANVUR partially integrates Part 1 of the ESG in its PhD accreditation procedures.

Panel commendation

The panel notes that the AVA system is a good example of high qualitative QA work with clear links and coherence between the internal and the external QA systems. It is the result of high ambitions of ANVUR for a meaningful and coherent national QA system, despite the limited available resources.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends to extend consideration of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG to all of ANVUR's external QA activities falling within the scope of the ESG.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Evidence

As described under the introductory chapter, ANVUR intends to define and design its activities specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the identified objectives, taking into account the legal provisions and the conditions in terms of financial and human resources.

The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes are intended to take into account the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions; they consider the need to support institutions to improve quality, as far as possible; they allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement; they do foresee cyclical follow-ups; they result in clear information to individual HEIs or programmes on the outcomes, and in collective information on the outcomes yearly handled to MIUR.

The external quality assurance within the AVA system is explicitly linked to the internal quality assurance at HEIs and is designed to reduce the burden of institutions which are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance. As described in the introductory chapter of the present report under

“Quality assurance”, in the AVA system the actors involved within HEIs are defined by law and include, for each university, an institutional strategic Board of Directors (*Consiglio di amministrazione – CdA*); an internal QA institutional implementing body (*Presidio Qualità di Ateneo – PQA*); internal QA teams for study programmes, composed of teaching and student representatives (*Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti – CPDS*); and an independent internal-external evaluation unit, acting as a bridge between the HEI and ANVUR (*Nucleo di Valutazione – NdV*). Also in the AFAM system the law defines the QA actors involved within the HEIs, but the system is less structured. The institutional bodies are: the Board of Directors (CdA) and the Independent external-internal Evaluation Unit (*Nucleo di Valutazione*). In both AVA and AFAM systems, NdV annual reports form the basis of the external reviews.

AFAM and PhD external QA activities are designated a narrow task by the legal mandate. Within the mandate and the methodologies developed, particularly in the evaluation of PhD, focus is given on the systematic verification of fulfilment of mainly quantitative requirements. During the on-site visit the review panel collected evidence on the willingness to overcome the limits of the legal mandate, particularly in the AFAM accreditation system.

The description of each activity and its methodologies is provided for in the introduction of the present report, under «ANVUR’s functions, activities, procedures».

Stakeholder involvement: see under standard 3.1.

Analysis

In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders. Whereas this is extensively done in the university and research units (with the exception of PhD students), AFAM stakeholders need to be more formally involved in the system. Stakeholders have, however, been involved in working groups in the development of the methodology in the AFAM system. (see the analysis, the recommendation and suggestions under standard 3.1).

AFAM and PhD students are currently insufficiently involved. In both cases there are current ongoing initiatives coordinated by the relevant ANVUR units and in collaboration with MIUR, in order to launch systematic surveys to students whose results could be analysed aiming at the improvement and development of the current HE system and ANVUR’s external assessment activities. As mentioned in the introduction, ANVUR’s core business in external quality assurance rotates around the AVA system and the review panel wishes to weight its judgement taking this factor into consideration. However, there is clearly a need of improvement in the AFAM. ANVUR is aware of this need and is making all possible efforts to develop this activity further, despite the limited legal mandate and the high level of state regulation. ANVUR’s current role in the evaluation of PhD programmes can hardly be considered an external quality assurance activity in the spirit of the ESG, but more a formal check of some specific features. As such the methodology is fit to achieve the objectives, although this activity might also evolve to a more extensive and enhancement oriented activity in the future.

The panel notices that the AVA system has been designed foreseeing actors mainly within the Italian HE system, leaving no much room for external input. Much is in the hands of experienced members or ex-members of PQAs who are or were members of NdVs in other universities, a limited circle of people who is gradually becoming bigger but solely within the Italian system. An advantage is that the link between internal and external QA becomes stronger, high competence is gradually being developed, fitness for purpose is assured. At the same time, there is a risk to confine QA in the hands of a limited number of experts, whereas the degree of acceptance of the system might be even bigger with more openness and broad participation. Nevertheless, the panel believes that the way AVA has been designed limits this risk.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends ANVUR to introduce and continue efforts aiming at a formal and concrete systematic involvement of student organizations – and the student body in general – in the design and enhancement of its activities.

The panel recommends ANVUR to further involve AFAM stakeholders in the design and continuous improvement of ANVUR's external QA activities in the AFAM sector.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests to initiate an evaluation, based on art. 2.5 of ANVUR's Regulations, focussing on the AFAM accreditation system and how to develop it based on its fitness for purpose. ANVUR might consider involving external bodies such as MusiQuE or the European association of conservatories (AEC).

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Evidence

Accreditation of new university programmes

Evaluations are based on the documentation submitted under the procedures established by ANVUR in its guidelines for institutions. The documentation (including the NdV annual self-assessment report) must be submitted by the deadline set every year by MIUR.

The external quality assurance processes include the following steps:

- Document analysis by a panel of experts (CEV) appointed by ANVUR, composed by three experts appointed by ANVUR, out of which 1 is nominated President of the group.
- On request by the CEV, ANVUR may organize on-site visits, agreed upon with the institution.
- Two CEV members (not the President) complete an evaluation form, expressing an individual judgement.
- Based on their judgements, the President draws up a preliminary consensus report, expressing a preliminary accreditation judgement, which is sent to the institution.
- The institution can react with a written document, giving its position statement and additional evidence, if relevant.
- CEV draws up the final report, also based on the position statement of the institution.
- Based on the final CEV report, the Governing Board issues its decision in an official deliberation.
- The final judgment is transmitted to MIUR, that grants (or not) the accreditation of the programme with a public decree.
- The report, containing the final decision, is published in the online dedicated platform of the given HEI (access limited to the given HEI).
- NdVs are formally asked to verify the progresses made concerning the issues reported by the CEV in the annual technical report, made available in the online dedicated platform.

Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (AVA)

The external quality assurance processes include the following steps:

- The date of the on-site visit is agreed with the university in a meeting which usually takes place at least 1 year before.
- At least 5 months before the on-site visit, sample programmes and departments which will be assessed are communicated to the university.

- At least 3 months before the visit, ANVUR selects and communicates to the university the CEV members.
- At least 2 months before the visit, the university makes available to the CEV all the relevant documents, including its self-assessment report;
- At least 2 months before the visit, the CEV starts the document analysis. In particular, the CEV must consider the following documents/data:
 - a) Self-assessment Report, prepared by the university;
 - b) University policy and strategy plans;
 - c) NdV, PQA and CPDS reports; Annual self-assessment study programme form of each selected programmes and annual self-assessment form of the selected departments);
 - d) quantitative indicators (regarding teaching, internationalization level, quality of research environment, employability);
 - e) other documents which the university considers relevant.
- On-site visit. It lasts between 3 and 5 days, depending on the size of the university. The CEV conducts interviews with the Rector and governing bodies, the heads of Departments, the QA key actors (PQA, NdV and CPDS), the student representatives, coordinators, professors and students of the selected programmes, administrative staff involved in QA, external stakeholders, alumni. The CEV also visits relevant facilities.
- Two months after the on-site visit, the CEV transmits the preliminary report to the university.
- In the following month, the university can produce additional information and counter-arguments;
- Based on the reaction of the university, the CEV formulates the final report.
- Based on the final report of the CEV, ANVUR drafts a conclusive synthetic report.
- Based on all the produced documentation, the Governing Board issues its decision in an official deliberation.
- ANVUR transmits the synthetic report and the final judgment to MIUR and to the university. Judgments are based on a scoring system, designed to assure consistency.
- MIUR grants (or not) the accreditation with a public decree. The institutional accreditation (including the sample programme accreditation) implies automatically the accreditation of all study programmes, as long as the annual NdV review reports confirm study programmes are still complying with the quality requirements.
- ANVUR report is published on the agency's website.
- For the follow-up, the NdV has to prepare every year a report to verify the progresses made by the university/department/programme concerning the issues highlighted by the CEV. In case of conditional accreditation (granted when the score is D in a scale from A to E, and E corresponds to a non-accreditation), the follow-up can have as a consequence the confirmation or the revocation of the accreditation (of the institution or study programme concerned). Clear deadlines are set for the fulfilment of conditions. Conditional accreditation is granted for a period of time defined by the Ministry according to ANVUR's proposal. At the expiry of the period, the NdV must write a follow-up report. ANVUR makes a remote evaluation and decides whereas to make a site-visit with experts or not. This has not yet taken place.

The accreditation of the universities is periodically carried out every 5 years, while that of study programmes lasts 3 years. After three years, all study programmes are assessed by ANVUR sur dossier. The evaluation takes into account the NdV evaluations and annual reports. If critical aspects emerge, they are discussed with the university and in particular with those responsible for the programme internal QA, with a specific on-site visit. If the assessment is positive, the accreditation of the programme is extended to match the university accreditation time window. Otherwise, the accreditation is revoked, and the programme is closed by MIUR with a public decree (enrolled students are given the possibility to complete the programme and get the final degree).

Accreditation of PhD programmes

In the process of accreditation of PhD programmes there is a preliminary self-evaluation procedure internal to the university, which involves the NdV. ANVUR is then in charge of the evaluation of the NdV report. The evaluation does not require a site visit. It is conducted by a core group of ANVUR's staff. ANVUR evaluation is summarized in a schematic report and officially approved by the Governing Board, after which it is made available to the requesting university on a dedicated web platform (accessible limited to the given HEI). Universities have the possibility to react to the initial decision providing further information and even changing some of the terms of the proposal within ten days from the initial assessment. ANVUR is in charge of providing a final evaluation on the basis of the new information provided.

The accreditation lasts for 5 years; however, every year ANVUR monitors key indicators and verifies that the programme still satisfies the requirements. If there are significant changes in the composition of the PhD faculty, or in the scientific project of the PhD, then the programme needs to be evaluated again by the agency.

Accreditation of AFAM programmes

a) Initial accreditation (1st cycle degrees) / Pre-condition is the approval of the offering institution, and all private institutions are visited for their approval and must demonstrate at least five years' experience in higher education in Art, Music and Dance. Whenever an institution changes headquarters or adds a new structure, ANVUR makes an on-site visit, under explicit request from the MIUR. In order to be eligible for accreditation, new programmes must have completed at least one three-year cycle.

- Applications are submitted annually through a ministerial IT platform in the period 1 February - 31 March.
- The evaluation is carried out by the AFAM unit of ANVUR in the period March- September every year.
- ANVUR appoints the panel of evaluators selected among the experts listed in the register of AFAM experts. Normally, 2-3 experts per programme are appointed.
- The assessment begins sur dossier. If the basic initial requirements are not met, the authorization is denied; otherwise, an on-site visit is normally carried out, unless the given institution was already visited no longer than 2 years before, within previous assessments.
- Experts discuss their evaluation in official meetings with the AFAM Unit of ANVUR and issue an analysis report.
- ANVUR's Governing Board approves the report.
- Based on the advice received by ANVUR through the IT platform, the Ministry grants (or denies) the authorisation to the institution to activate the new programmes by public decree.

The initial accreditation of 2nd cycle degrees follows a similar process, except when it comes to the appointment of experts and to site visits. Assessments are carried out by a core group of 7 experts, accompanied by ANVUR staff; they do not envisage on-site visits.

As far as site-visits are concerned, the panel could not find information about their conduction (when, under what criteria, who decides) in the Guidelines and instructions published online, nor in the legislative texts. Evidences are bases on the SAR, on the interviews conducted on-site and on the complementary documentation received under request of the panel prior the visit. One of these documents lists all AFAM accreditation procedures conducted in 2017 and 2018, containing these pieces of information: institution name, nr of programmes applying for accreditation per institution, if a site-visit was conducted, decision. Datas are summarized here:

Initial accreditation 2018 (first cycle)	20 institutions listed, none was visited, involving a total of 51 programmes. Most were ongoing procedures in November 2018. 2 institutions were already visited in the initial accreditation 2017
Initial accreditation 2018 (second cycle)	101 institutions listed, none was visited, involving a total of 577 programmes

	If not rejected or still ongoing, all other procedures ended with a conditional decision except one negative.
Initial accreditation 2017 (first cycle)	33 institutions listed, out of which 15 were visited (involving 47 programmes) and 18 were not visited (involving 65 programmes). All institutions that were not visited resulted in negative decisions. Out of the 15 visited institutions, 8 resulted in positive decisions and 7 in negative decisions.

b) Periodic accreditation (follow-up) / Accredited programmes at AFAM approved private institutions are subject to periodic evaluation at the end of the first and third year of activity and at least once every three years thereafter. As part of the periodic programme assessment, each institution must undergo an internal preliminary self-evaluation which involves the NdV. Moreover, private institutions must annually update and communicate in the dedicated IT platform data related to its bodies, teaching and administrative personnel, students, actions for the right to education, the economic-financial situation and any additional data necessary for the periodic ANVUR evaluation.

The assessment takes into account:

- analysis of the NdV annual report and the results of the teaching and research quality monitoring and control activity carried out by all the parties involved in the institution quality system;
- assessment of the information contained in IT platform for the periodic assessment.

If an institution has not made significant changes in terms of faculty and/or building/infrastructures since the initial accreditation procedure, a site visit at the end of the first and third years is generally not required⁵. However, an on-site visit may be proposed by the expert panel, in the investigation of formal complaints, or if any concerns require further review⁶. Site visits may be required by MIUR if there is a change concerning the location or the responsible professors. After a site-visit a detailed written report is produced, including any issues that arose during the visit. According to the documentation provided to the panel prior the visit:

Periodic accreditation 2018 (first cycle)	13 institutions listed, out of which 4 were visited (involving 12 programmes) and 5 were not visited (involving 20 programmes), all still ongoing procedures. The rest were rejected (no site-visit). Among the institutions that were not visited, 1 had already been visited in the initial accreditation of first cycle degrees in 2017.
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The evaluation report, approved by the Governing Board, is made available to the university on a dedicated platform (access limited to the given institution). The report includes a section for recommendations. In the periodic evaluations ANVUR verifies the follow-up of recommendations.

The lack of one or more requirements under art. 11 of Presidential Decree no. 212/2005 results in the revocation of the accreditation, which is ordered by MIUR decree, based on the ANVUR's judgement. In this case, all enrolled students can complete their studies, and obtain the related qualification.

Analysis

The panel can confirm that the external quality assurance processes of ANVUR are pre-defined, implemented consistently and summed up in guidelines published in ANVUR's website. For all activities they include a self-assessment, an external assessment, a report resulting from the external assessment, a follow-up.

⁵ Page 48 SAR.

⁶ Page 25 SAR.

It is clear to the panel that on-site visits are mandatory for the periodic accreditation of institutions and academic programmes. They are not conducted for PhD programmes and are conducted subject to certain conditions for AFAM programmes. When it comes to AFAM 2nd cycle degrees, site visits are not conducted. The panel learned from interviewees representatives of AFAM institutions that they experience a high usefulness of site-visits, as they involve teaching staff and contribute raising awareness on quality and the improvement potential. For PhD programmes site visits are not foreseen in the design of the process.

In the accreditation of new study programs on-site visits are not mandatory. Guidelines give the possibility to the agency to do a visit if needed. According to the interviews conducted by the review panel on site, it seems on-site visits are basically never conducted. Representatives of HEIs believe site-visits would be highly beneficial, allowing for a direct contact and an exchange with the panel of experts. Currently, experts are evaluating programmes sur dossier, and HEIs believe the added value of this activity is not yet maximized.

The panel learned from the interview with representatives from MIUR that the perspective of the ministry is that systematic on-site visits are unimaginable for costs reasons. It is a matter of budget. According to MIUR, the system should rather split from ex-ante evaluations to ex-post, looking at outcomes, reducing regulations and giving more autonomy to HEIs.

PhD programmes are assessed externally, in the sense that ANVUR is conducting the evaluations and therefore assessments are carried out externally to the PhD programmes and offering institutions. In other words, they do not foresee the appointment of single experts external to the agency. A core group of ANVUR qualified staff (both permanent and with fix-term contracts) makes all the evaluations. In the view of the panel this plays in favour of the consistent implementation of QA processes, and less in favour of the reliability, as the agency acts as evaluator and as decisional body at the same time, even if these roles are clearly covered by different individuals. The review panel, however, believes accountability is not threatened in the methodological format developed, where criteria for outcomes and calculations are very clear and a simulation tool is made available to applicants. As for the usefulness, although one might argue that almost a thousand assessments per year are by necessity a mere check-list of yes-no compliance, the stakeholders interviewed all agreed that the system helps guaranteeing minimal requirements, it serves to eliminate poor programmes and to identify innovative areas of strength with regards to: interdisciplinarity, cross-sectoriality, internationalization. As for follow-up processes, ANVUR conducts annual verifications of the persistence of the compliance to requirements. The system is not designed to assess and monitor enhancement, hence there cannot be following-up on recommendations, as there are none. The annual follow-ups carried out for all PhD programmes (almost one thousand yearly), as well as the design of the activity more generally, justifies the choice of ANVUR of having internal qualified staff instead of recruiting ad hoc panel of external experts involving selection, appointment, training, contracting, all of which would involve an enormous bureaucratic burden and high costs for the agency. ANVUR's current role in the evaluation of PhD programmes can hardly be considered an external quality assurance activity in the spirit of the ESG, but more a formal check of some specific features. Therefore, the review panel has focused more on ANVUR's other activities, mainly in the AVA system, in its assessments of this standard.

The panel finds the strong interconnection between ANVUR and the NdV commendable. Follow-up of procedures in the AVA system is under the responsibility of the NdV, with annual reports delivered to ANVUR. NdVs, composed of a majority of external members of a HEI, evaluate the performance of the internal QA system. ANVUR effectively monitors the progresses made concerning programmes and institutions thanks to the NdV's annual reports. Outcomes stimulate to build internal units to coordinate the follow-up on the internal QA, raising awareness and quality culture.

NdVs do report annually to ANVUR and to MIUR in September-October, describing teaching, research and 3rd mission, using ANVUR's indicators and templates, plus the performance report – at strategic institutional level –, which has a different deadline. Each NdV has administrative support, some members are suspended from their academic duties while undertaking the work at the NdV. NdVs also include student members,

and this is explicitly required by law. They also have to give feedback about the budget, evidences on how students surveys are managed, they provide information on new PhD programmes, new programmes and comments on how public money is spent. All is reported in one single report, except from information and self-assessments on PhD programmes, which is sent to the Ministry separately. Reports also address programmes and departments for research. They audit 20-25 programmes per year, on a rotation system if programmes are many, or all of them in smaller HEIs. The choice is dictated by the need to assess a mixture of problematic and good programmes in order to share good practices. NdV reports end with recommendations. The panel got a strong impression that impact is concrete and followed-up: based on NdV internal auditing, the internal QA institutional unit PQA must act. The panel learned during the interviews that the system is perceived as useful and coherent, although bureaucratization remains a common concern. ANVUR uses NdV reports for example to decide which programmes should be chosen in the 10% sample assessment, integrated in the cyclical institutional accreditation procedure. What is then the added value of ANVUR review if NdVs are doing evaluations permanently? The panel is convinced that the NdV is a central body, communicating with the senate, the rectorate, and the PQAs. But the panel also found that awareness on the need of quality enhancement raises considerably when ANVUR periodically comes with its external QA assessments.

In AFAM institutions NdVs must be composed of 3 people (out of which 2 external and can be from abroad) and is put at the same level as the rectorate in the institutional hierarchy. Annual reports of the NdVs are also based on a survey on student satisfaction, with standardized criteria developed at national level. Last year the Budget Law cut funds for NdVs, foreseeing only the reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses. It became clear to the panel that it has become difficult to maintain active NdVs with no incentives for external members as a recognition of the importance of their role and impact.

According to the ESG (Guidelines), external quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact. In the view of the panel ANVUR is still building its role in the AFAM sector and will gradually need to consolidate it implementing external QA process better linked with the internal QA ones, all adapted to the AFAM sector specificities and with a more significant recognition of the importance of QA in the Italian HE system and beyond.

During the on-site visit, based on the stakeholders expressed views, the panel got a strong impression that ANVUR's QA processes are very useful and support the introduction of the idea of a quality culture into the Italian QA system.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends to increase the usefulness of the AFAM accreditation system implementing processes compatible with the AVA system and adapted to the AFAM institutional context.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

Evidence

Criteria for the selection of experts are all defined in public calls, publicly available. This is the case for the following profiles/functions: AVA coordinators, AVA disciplinary experts, AVA system experts, AVA student experts, AFAM disciplinary experts, AFAM system experts.

Public calls do explicitly mention that eligible applicants will be trained through an obligatory preparatory course as final requisite to the enrolment in the experts' Register. There is a register for AVA disciplinary

experts (376 male, 171 female) and a specific one for AFAM disciplinary experts (134 male, 63 female). Student expert pool currently has 40 experts (39 male, 9 female), e-learning pool has 30 experts (22 male, 8 female), QA system expert pool (both AVA and AFAM) has 238 experts (157 male, 81 female) and there are 14 experts in the coordinators pool (6 male, 8 female). Registration does not entail any right to obtain external assessment assignments. Mandates are then assigned to experts by ANVUR's Director, after deliberation of the Governing Board, with the stipulation of a contract and according to criteria that ensure a matching profile with the HEI or programme to be evaluated, compliance with the principles of independence, impartiality in the performance of the requested service, rotation and the absence of causes of incompatibility and conflicts of interest at the moment of conferment. In case of online HEIs or study programmes one or more members of the panel are experts in online-distance education. Experts panels for the accreditation of new programmes are composed of at least 3 members (no students), whereas for the institutional accreditation – which integrates the accreditation of selected study programmes – panels can range from a minimum of 7 experts (including one student member) for small institutions to approx. 30 experts (including a maximum of 5 student members) for larger institutions; an ANVUR representative accompanies the group and is responsible for the logistics and administrative aspects of the visit. The panel systematically includes a President and a Coordinator. Normally the Coordinator is an ANVUR evaluator/technical officer but, depending on availability, this role could be assigned to an expert from the register. The Coordinator assists the President, ensuring that: relevant information reaches all panel members; scheduled dates and times are respected; processes respect ANVUR's Guidelines; final evaluations are consistent and supported by clearly identified evidence.

The Governing Board annually verifies the activity of evaluation of the experts for the confirmation of the enrolment in the Register.

The panel was given examples of training packages and received evidences of the conduct of these preparatory sessions, lasting 2 days (1 day for AFAM experts). Student representatives are recruited through a dedicated call (only foreseen within AVA activities) and do follow a separate training, obligatory as well. Eligible students must be already bachelor graduates. The students interviewed during the on-site visit gave very positive feedbacks on the training. Trainings are held by the agency staff and by senior experts at ANVUR headquarters. The AFAM Unit plans to involve MusiQuE as player in the future training of experts. For all experts the Code of Ethics apply, as well as transparency measures (CV and remuneration are publicly available), as analysed under standard 3.6. Remuneration differs for student experts, who receive approx. half the pay of the rest of the members, in line with the tasks assigned (they contribute to the experts report only for standards concerning student issues).

For PhD programme accreditation, assessments are conducted by a core group of 8 ANVUR dedicated staff. Considering they assess almost one thousand programmes per year, and that it is a permanent activity of the agency with no peaks or absence of work, ANVUR has chosen to have full-time employees for this task, instead of appointing panels for single programmes or clusters. There are no PhD students involved in the external assessment procedures. For all staff units the Code of Ethics apply, as well as transparency measures (CV and remuneration are publicly available), as analysed under standard 3.6.

The High Committee of Experts for the accreditation of new AFAM 2nd cycle degree programmes was composed of 7 qualified external experts (among which one Musique international expert). Due to the very high number of applications (over 500) to be dealt with in a few months, the AFAM Unit found as temporary solution to assign to this panel all the assessments of the first accreditation round (in 2018). Otherwise AFAM programmes are assessed by 3 external experts per procedure. There are no students involved, so far, in AFAM external QA procedures.

Foreign experts are currently under-represented. The registers count 1 for AVA and 2 for AFAM. Considering the recruitment runs through national public calls, and most of the assessments are conducted in Italian, the reach-out outside of Italy is limited. Also, as of now only one foreign expert participated in ANVUR's external assessments.

Analysis

All of ANVUR external quality assurance activities are carried out by external experts, except the accreditation of PhD programmes, carried out by ANVUR employees. So far, the systematic inclusion of at least one student member is implemented in the periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes. The integration of student experts in the AFAM system is planned in next accreditation cycle. As for the accreditation of PhD programmes, considering the assessments are conducted by ANVUR staff, the core group of evaluators might be assisted by PhD students with specific discipline-specific mandates for a limited number of programmes in their discipline.

As for the AVA system, students that wish to enter in the experts register need to apply via a public open call, coming in principle every 2 years. According to students interviews by the review panel during the on-site visit, open calls are not launched systematically, information to the massive student body is poor, as well as the timing. In their opinion, instead of foreseeing these openings only occasionally, ANVUR should accept candidates permanently. Students believe it would ease the recruitment process and efficiently reach motivated students during their short student-life, considering eligible candidates must be bachelor graduates and masters' degree are intended to last approx. 2 years. Trainings could then be organized on a yearly basis. The review panel recognizes that the short period of time in which a student can act as expert is a common concern in Europe. Perhaps ANVUR could ask the students on the register to reconfirm their interest and capacity on a yearly basis, and consider accepting new candidates more systematically. ANVUR might invite the student organisations to put forward suggestions as to how this could be done to better support the students.

The involvement of international peers in review panels seems to be still very limited even though ANVUR shows international ambitions among the strategic objectives. Language barriers can be overcome by a number of proactive measures aiming at reaching out qualified experts outside of Italy.

Even if there has been some concrete progress towards gender equality, women are still less represented in the expert panels and significantly underrepresented as chair or peer-leader of expert groups, which may slightly affect the development of the decision-making process. Being more diverse, the expert panels may better consider issues related to gender issues. At the same time that may also help, indirectly, to bring women expertise forward into the community. ANVUR might envisage promoting some sort of innovative practices that could increase effective gender equality, particularly to achieve full gender balance in the appointment of experts.

Panel commendation

The panel finds the establishment and management of the public experts' register and the quality of trainings a commendable practice.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends to involve student experts in all external quality assurance activities.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests to proactively involve international experts in external quality assurance activities.

The panel suggests to explore ways, ideally involving student organizations, to make calls for and accept student candidates for the experts register more systematically.

The panel suggests ANVUR to strive further to promote a higher representativeness of women in expert panels, particularly in the position of president of the panel.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Evidence

The Legislative Decree n. 19/2012 Section III Art. 10 Par. 5 explicitly foresees that, in order to ensure maximum transparency and publicity, the criteria and indicators of ANVUR's external QA activities are published on the institutional website of ANVUR, on the Ministry website and on the website of each university.

This is the case for all of ANVUR external QA activities, whose results are based on explicit and published criteria described in the relevant guidelines or in legislation.

Accreditation of new university study programmes (Art.4, par. 1, MIUR Decree n.987/2016): ANVUR verifies Requirement 3. For each focus point in which the Requirement is articulated, the appointed panel of experts (CEV) is requested to give a motivated positive or negative judgement. The resulting technical report (an online form) ends with a yes/no accreditation proposal, which is agreed upon by the CEV. The final decision falls under the responsibility of the Governing Board, which may change the proposed assessment, motivating its decision. The Governing Board proposals are transmitted to MIUR, which grants (or not) accreditation, in full conformity with ANVUR evaluation.

Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (Ministerial Decree 987/2016 and AVA Guidelines): The CEV appointed by ANVUR analyses the internal QA system of the HEI at all levels. Beside the central institutional level, a selection of study programmes (at least 10% of them) and departments are also assessed. The procedures to be followed by the CEV and, in particular, the Requirements/Indicators/Focus Points to be evaluated are specified in the AVA guidelines, as well as the criteria for the selection of the sample department and programmes. The CEV gives a motivated assessment for each focus point, and assigns a score comprised between 1 and 10, which is agreed upon by the whole CEV. Scores 6 to 10 are associated with positive judgements, while scores equal to or less than 5 indicate the presence of critical issues and are associated with a specific "Recommendation" (score = 4 or 5) or "Condition" (score < 4), included in the Evaluation Form by the CEV. Each programme evaluated during the procedure receives a yes/no accreditation proposal, depending on arithmetic calculations. The university receives the Evaluation Form for each assessed programme, containing all scores assigned to each focus points. On the basis of scores assigned by the CEV, the outcome of the process is defined by ANVUR in a final Review Report.

The final score (P_{fin}) depends on arithmetic calculations and the final judgement is defined as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Scoring calculation system in AVA assessments

Final score	LEVEL	JUDGEMENT	OUTCOME
$P_{fin} \geq 7,5$	A	Very good	Periodic accreditation valid for five years
$6,5 \leq P_{fin} < 7,5$	B	Good	Periodic accreditation valid for five years
$5,5 \leq P_{fin} < 6,5$	C	Satisfactory	Periodic accreditation valid for five years
$4 \leq P_{fin} < 5,5$	D	Poor	Temporary Accreditation. The duration is defined by ANVUR, according to the CEV proposal. A failure to overcome the conditions within the accreditation period would bring the judgement to "very poor"

$P_{fin} < 4$	E	Very poor	University is not able to guarantee the minimal quality standards and should be closed
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The Review Report by ANVUR is transmitted to MIUR. Formal accreditation is hence granted by MIUR, in full conformity with ANVUR evaluation.

Accreditation of PhD Programmes (Ministerial Decree 45/2013 and Guidelines): the assessment of the PhD programmes carried on by ANVUR is based on the requirements specified in the law. The Guidelines of 2017 define how each legal requirement is assessed (criteria, calculations, evidences). Moreover, programmes can be assessed as 'innovative' if they fulfil specified objective criteria outlined in the Guidelines, concerning the internationalization, the interdisciplinarity and the cross-sectoriality. The outcomes of the assessment procedure result in a yes/no accreditation. The outcome, formally approved by the Governing Board, is transmitted to MIUR, which grants (or not) accreditation, in full conformity with ANVUR evaluation.

Accreditation of AFAM programmes (MIUR note 8093/2016 and ANVUR Minimum AFAM Course Resource Requirements for 1st degree cycles; Ministerial Decree n. 14/2018 and ANVUR Guidelines for 2nd degree cycles): The assessment criteria specified in legal texts and AFAM Guidelines. The outcome of the assessment procedure is a yes/no accreditation. The final decision falls under the responsibility of the Governing Board, which may change the proposed assessment, motivating its decision. The Governing Board proposals are transmitted to MIUR, which grants (or not) accreditation, in full conformity with ANVUR evaluation.

Analysis

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality activities conducted by ANVUR is effectively based on explicit and published criteria. According to methodologies developed, to the preparation of ANVUR's staff, to the targeted trainings of the experts, to the internal QA of final reports and to the decision-making process, the review panel confirms criteria for outcome are applied consistently. An additional evidence was collected analysing examples of assessment reports of CEV and ANVUR for all activities and by the registration of a low number of requests for re-examinations (as analysed under standard 2.6).

Decisions on individual procedures are prepared by one member of the Governing Board, in order to facilitate the decision-making in the official Governing Board meeting. During the interviews conducted onsite, the panel learned that if the member of the Governing Board in charge of preparing the final ANVUR decision feels that there are 'unclarified questions', this person can in principle collect own information, particularly concerning context issues and local specificities. This constitutes an additional information received unofficially, through non-standardized channels. Although the intention (and the effect) is to increase fairness and consistency, in the view of the review panel this step of the decision-making phase is not transparent. The panel collected sufficient evidence showing that this final step is conducted in order to assure respect of the criteria for reaching accreditation decisions, aiming at their consistent implementation. Nevertheless, the panel suggests that the results of any of the findings arising from this practice are made explicit in the final ANVUR report, assuring full transparency at all steps of the decision-making process.

Decisions by MIUR follow systematically ANVUR's proposals. In the accreditation of universities and academic programmes (including PhD) the ministerial act has to be consistent with the decision taken by ANVUR. However, in justified cases MIUR has the possibility to ask the revision of an evaluation; in this case, ANVUR may conduct a new assessment, appointing a different panel of experts. In the AFAM procedures, legislation does not explicitly constrain MIUR's acts, but they have been systematically consistent with ANVUR's proposals.

The panel got a strong impression during the interviews that the scoring system introduced in institutional and programme accreditation has been well accepted by the various stakeholders, namely by HEIs. Although the review panel finds the calculation algorithms for the final judgement somehow complicated, a high level of acceptance was witnessed by rectors, PQAs, NdVs, CPDSs and students at the on-site visit. This is an additional proof of clear criteria applied consistently.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggests that the results of any of the findings arising from individual investigation of Governing Board members are made explicit in the final ANVUR report, assuring full transparency at all steps of the decision-making process.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Evidence

Art. 4 of the ministerial decree instituting ANVUR: “The agency publishes the results of its analyses and evaluations”. This is translated in Art. 19 Par. 4 of ANVUR Organisational Regulations (under the chapter on transparency), according to which “in order to guarantee the utmost transparency as required by current legislation, the agency is responsible for publishing specific information aimed at making public the results of its analysis and assessment activities in specific sections of its institutional website”.

Accreditation of new programmes: For each evaluated study programme the review report by the experts is published on a dedicated web platform where HEIs can view the reports which are exclusively related to its own study programmes, also accessible to MIUR, who issues public accreditation decrees based on the decisions of the Governing Board. The reports are not made available to the general public.

Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (AVA): The reports of the experts, preliminary and final, are sent to the institution, which uses them as a tool for continuous improvement. The report by the experts is the basis for the institution’s follow-up action of the external evaluation. It covers: context description; the description of the procedure, including experts involved; evidence, analysis and findings; conclusions; features of good practice; recommendations for follow-up action. It easily reaches 400 pages or more. The expert reports are not made available to the general public. The ANVUR final synthetic report, based on the expert report and on the position statement of the institution after reception of the preliminary expert reports, provides information to society regarding the assessment outcomes, according to a pre-defined format. It normally does not exceed 25 pages. It is sent to the Ministry and in copy to the institution and is published on the ANVUR website. MIUR issues public accreditation decrees based on ANVUR reports and on the decisions of the Governing Board.

Accreditation of PhD Programmes: As assessments are conducted by evaluators/technical officers of ANVUR, expert reports coincide with ANVUR reports. Some examples of ANVUR reports have been made available to the review panel prior the on-site visit. Evaluation reports are made available to the university proposing the PhD programmes but not to the general public. MIUR is in charge of the final accreditation decision on the basis of ANVUR’s proposal and hence the decision concerning the publication of the accreditation results is made by MIUR and not by ANVUR.

Accreditation of AFAM programmes: the preliminary and final expert reports are sent to institutions to be used as tools for continuous improvement. Reports and decisions follow a mandatory format. The

assessment report must contain the following: information on the institution and its context; a description of the way the procedure was carried out, including the composition of the panel, the names of the appointed secretary and process coordinator; the documentation that is used by the panel and, when applicable, the programme of a site visit; a description of the findings of the panel, the considerations and judgements; a list of recommendations for improvement by the panel; in the event of a conditional judgement, a list of the conditions that must be met before full accreditation. ANVUR final report is based on AFAM-expert evaluations and approved by the Governing Board. Until now neither expert reports, nor ANVUR final reports have been made available to the general public. The agency reports are planned to be published on a dedicated page of ANVUR website.

Analysis

Full expert reports are only published in the dedicated online platform with limited access to the HEI concerned, its NdV and, for PhD and AFAM programmes, the Ministry. Single HEIs decide to make it available on their own website.

The synthetic reports produced by ANVUR in the periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes (AVA) are effectively publicly available in ANVUR's website. The panel asked to all interview groups during the on-site visit what would be the obstacles to make the full experts reports available to the public, and, in general, no formal or legal obstacles were found. The legal basis for the publication of – any – reports is implicit in the law and in ANVUR's regulations, as the agency must publish *specific information* aimed at making public the results of its assessment activities. The arguments raised concerned the nature of the expert reports, which are highly technical and could reach up to 400 pages, according to the size of the institutions and the number of departments and study programmes assessed. They are quality enhancement tools specifically addressed to the HEI concerned as basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation, involving NdV, PQA and CPDSs. Experts feel they can more freely focus on the areas of improvement, knowing the report will become an internal QA tool of the given institution. On the other hand, ANVUR reports are meant to be for a wider public, containing a synthesis of the assessment, evaluation criteria and their results, counter-arguments from the assessed institution after reception of the preliminary report, recommendations for further improvement and the Governing Board decision. They are much shorter (normally 25 pages), follow a common template, are clear and concise in their structure and language and are therefore user friendly. ANVUR reports are always cross-checked for consistency by a second officer and by a member of the Governing Board, before they are finalized and handled to the Governing Board (together with the full expert report) for its accreditation decision. The panel recognized that the work done by ANVUR in assuring the quality of ANVUR reports and their accessibility to the public can be considered a good practice. However, full expert reports shall be made publicly available as well, for full compliance with the ESG. The same consideration applies to the remaining activities falling under the scope of the ESG.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends to publish full reports by the experts not only clear and accessible to the academic community but also to external partners and other interested individuals.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Evidence

According to Art. 4 par. 2 of the Presidential Decree of 2010 instituting ANVUR, institutions may ask only once the re-examination of the external assessment reports approved by the Governing Board. This has

been translated by the following dispositions in Art. 19.5 of ANVUR's Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017): the HEIs concerned may request, once and within 30 days from the publication of the evaluation report approved by the agency, the re-examination of their evaluation. The procedure is activated at the request of the institution concerned, by completing a form made available in the section "Request for re-examination" in which the data of the requesting HEI and the justification of the request must be indicated. The Governing Board shall notify, within 30 days of receipt of the request for re-examination, the acceptance or refusal of the request.

Not only HEIs may ask to the Governing Board to make a re-examination of the assessment. This is also legally possible for MIUR, within the accreditation of new study programmes and the periodic institutional-programme accreditation:

Accreditation of new programmes: Legislative Decree n. 19/2012 Section II Art. 8 Par. 6: if the Ministry recognizes elements for an evaluation different from that of ANVUR, it may ask for the re-examination of the evaluation, with a motivated request and similarly to what is provided for in Article 4, par. 2, of the Presidential Decree February 1, 2010, n. 76 (the Decree instituting ANVUR). Within thirty days of receipt of the ministerial re-examination request, ANVUR formulates a final opinion, with specific reference to the elements highlighted in the ministerial request.

Periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes: Legislative Decree n. 19/2012 Section II Art. 9 Par. 5: with a motivated request to be submitted within 20 days from the receipt of the results of the periodic assessment, the Ministry can ask ANVUR the re-examination of the evaluation. Within the following 20 days from the receipt of the ministerial request, ANVUR formulates its final opinion.

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During the on-site visit it was also made clear that non-accredited programmes or institutions can complain directly to MIUR asking for a re-assessment. In these cases, MIUR asks the Governing Board of ANVUR to reconsider the assessment evaluating additional information and re-examinations might lead to positive conclusions. If needed, the Governing Board appoints a new panel of experts and makes a whole new assessment. As the Governing Board deliberations are legally binding, if the opinion is negative also the second time, then the requesting study programmes are not accredited and must close.

If an institution wants to appeal against MIUR's decisional decrees, it must go to the administrative tribunals.

Accreditation of new university programmes: MIUR receives occasionally complaints from non-accredited programmes that ask for a reassessment. In these cases, MIUR asks the Governing Board of ANVUR to reconsider its evaluation and re-examinations might lead to positive conclusions, considering the additional information. Sometimes, however, the Governing Board confirms its negative assessment and study programmes cannot be established.

12 accreditations of new programmes were rejected in 2017, 2 asked for a re-examination, which lead to a positive conclusion. During the on-site visit, interviewed representatives of HEIs confirmed that they do know of the possibility to ask the Ministry to consider a reassessment.

AVA system: There is a possibility for HEIs to challenge the outcome of the Governing Board within 2 months from its deliberation and ask for re-examination or start a whole new procedure. After that the judicial procedure applies. This process is defined as part of the design of external quality assurance activities and communicated to the institutions and to experts, being part of the preparatory session ANVUR does at each university at the beginning of the procedure, respectively part of the training package for experts. However, it is not made explicit in the AVA guidelines intended for HEIs and experts. As a consequence, not all actors involved are equally aware of this possibility, as it was witnessed during the interviews in the on-site visit of the review panel.

AFAM: There is no clarity about the existence of a complaint or appeal system, as it was witnessed during the interviews in the on-site visit of the review panel. According to the self-assessment report of ANVUR,

AFAM programme evaluations are made available to the institutions on a dedicated online platform. Institutions have the possibility to react to the initial decision providing further information and even changing some of the terms of the proposal within ten days from the initial evaluation. ANVUR reaches a final evaluation on the basis of the new information provided. The Ministry formally communicates to the institutions the possibility to make appeals when it takes its decision based on ANVUR evaluation. However, none of the given information is made explicit in the AFAM guidelines intended for HEIs and experts.

Accreditation of PhD programmes: ANVUR's provisions laid down in the Organizational Regulations are well known by the actors involved. In 2017, out of 29 proposals for negative decisions, after a re-examination of the Governing Board (including additional evidences) all were accredited but 1. Indeed, the self-assessment report indicates that the procedure provides that the institutions may counterargue the initial decision by ANVUR providing additional proof of evidence (mainly changes in the composition of the PhD faculty), before the final decision is taken by ANVUR.

Applying to all activities: other than the legal re-examination provisions, there is no further information or instructions available about: the definition of processes; what can be questioned other than the decision of the Governing Board; what documents have to be provided to ANVUR; how are re-examination requests handled; how to handle an appeal or request of re-examination to MIUR.

Concerning complaint procedures on processes, the self-assessment report indicates that when appropriateness and accuracy of an evaluation procedure carried out by ANVUR is questioned, any individual or institution may appeal to a judge regarding factual and legal errors of an assessment procedure. In these cases, ANVUR has administrative officers with specific competences to follow the complaint procedure. According to Art. 14.1.b of the ANVUR Organizational Regulations (version of 13 September 2017), ANVUR organizational structure foresees a Legal Affairs Section responsible for managing litigation or legal issues, with particular reference to those relating to evaluation activities; it manages relations with the State Attorney. So far, no legal procedures were handled with regards to the activities assessed in the present review.

Other than the possibility to submit a complaint or appeal, the HEI can comment on reports and present counter-arguments in position statements. The procedures for the accreditation of new programmes, as well as for the periodic accreditation of HEIs and their programmes, foresee that, after reception of the preliminary expert report, institutions have the possibility to present counter-arguments and/or provide additional information. These will be taken into account by the panel of experts in the final report. ANVUR considers the observations of HEIs in drafting its Review report. These modalities are explicitly mentioned in the respective guides intended for HEIs and experts. Through this channel, issues can be resolved before the Governing Board deliberates on accreditation proposals.

Analysis

Any official decision taken by MIUR may be appealed in court according to the procedure set by the administrative law. Formal pre-decisions taken by ANVUR's Governing Board may be contested by the Ministry of Education, which may ask for a re-examination by the agency, namely if MIUR has information on a specific HEI which is not in possession of ANVUR. This can occur either by own initiative of the Ministry, or in case a HEI signals founded dissatisfaction to the Ministry. The Ministry normally decides to either review the entire procedure or to ask the Governing Board to appoint a new expert panel and to start a new evaluation (that can change the meaning of the first evaluation made by the panel of experts, and ANVUR decision). The panel finds it unclear under what criteria a new accreditation process is initiated, and how exactly this new evaluation is carried-out, as this is not described in the guidelines nor in any section of ANVUR's website and the panel could not find it in the legal provisions.

HEIs have a chance to comment on expert reports, making counter-arguments and/or providing additional evidence, which are duly taken into account by the experts in their final reports. In addition, they have a chance to ask ANVUR (directly or through the Ministry) to make a re-examination. In this case a whole new procedure can be started, with a new group of experts. HEIs have in the meantime a chance to correct some

of the shortenings identified by the first external assessment. In principle, it seems that this possibility only fits for substantial facts that have been misunderstood. However, the panel was presented, as an example, the case of a university which implied a change of the institution's location (which, more than a revisable fact, is a real change in the situation about shortcomings in the infrastructure). Therefore, the mechanism is not used to purely review a misjudgement since it allows to present new completely different facts that lead to a different decision.

Despite the dispositions of the Organizational Regulations on handling requests for re-examinations to ANVUR (the procedure is activated at the request of the institution concerned, by completing a form made available in the section "Request for re-examination" in which the data of the requesting HEI and the justification of the request must be indicated) the panel could not find information on the given "section" in ANVUR's website, in the organizational chart, nor in the procedural guidelines. Moreover, the given timeframe foresees that requests for reassessment must be filed within 30 days from the publication of the relative evaluation report approved by the agency. Considering ANVUR's practices on the publication of reports (analysed under standard 2.6), the panel confirms this disposition could hardly be applied equally for all its activities, unless publication is meant to be in the online dedicated platform, whose access is limited to the concerned HEI only. Timing does not always correspond to the general provisions, as in the AVA system the interviewed representatives of HEIs indicated that a period of 2 months is foreseen to submit a request of re-examination, after the deliberation of the Governing Board. The panel noted that these dispositions are not part of the guides intended for HEIs, which needs to be corrected in order to assure clarity on the effective processes.

In general, there is not a specific appeals committee responsible for reviewing and ruling on appeals filed in relation to the final decisions taken by ANVUR. Neither there is a specific formal committee to handle complaints about the evaluation process. In fact, an internal reviewing process by a separate body – being part or not of the Agency – which acts independently, is not in place.

The Governing Board can accept or reject re-examination requests. The same body, namely the Governing Board, makes its judgement the first time and a re-examination the second time, based on the given procedure or based on a whole new evaluation undertaken by a new expert panel. De facto, the Governing Board is both the decisional body and the re-examination body. In case the situation would escalate until a judicial proceeding, ANVUR has administrative officers with specific competences to follow the procedure.

During the decision-making process, as we have seen under standard 2.5, when the member of the Governing Board in charge of preparing the final ANVUR decision feels that there are 'unclarified questions', this person can try to collect own information, particularly concerning context issues and local specificities. This constitutes an additional information received unofficially, through non-standardized channels and in principle this can hardly be contested by the HEI, although the intention is to increase fairness and consistency.

HEIs and all actors involved showed to be generally informed on the possibilities to express disagreement at all steps of the procedure (after reception of the draft expert report, after ANVUR decision is taken, after MIUR decision is taken). The 3rd possibility, though, was never undertaken (an appeal to the court against a formal decision by MIUR) and the interviewed actors would hardly consider such an extreme situation, most of the 'problems' being effectively and efficiently solved in the two precedent steps. The involved actors seem to be satisfied with the current system, which, according to the interviewed representatives, enables to more fairness without the need to recur to the legal appeal system involving a court of justice. The continuous dialogue between ANVUR and its partners helps building mutual trust and solid responsive mechanisms, although transparency might be improved.

Altogether the system seems to respond to what we might consider an "opportunity control", but the panel finds that a clear and transparent formal complaints and appeal procedure within ANVUR is not yet fully developed. Nevertheless, internal mechanisms to express dissatisfaction or disagreement are part of the

design of external quality assurance processes and are communicated to the institutions, although not fully or not always integrated in the publicly available accompanying instruments.

While preserving the role of the Governing Board in this context and in the interest of greater legal certainty, ANVUR might envisage considering some sort of independent standing body with specific competences to review the consistency and potential flaws of ANVUR's final decisions. The possibility that an organ of this type could confirm, revoke or annul ANVUR decisions would help to clearly dissociate the procedure for reviewing from the decision-making procedure.

Concluding its analysis, it is quite clear to the review panel that there is access for a HEI to appeal the decision made by the Governing Board, for all of ANVUR activities: "The procedure is activated at the request of the institution concerned, by completing a form made available in the section "Request for re-examination" in which the data of the requesting HEI and the justification of the request must be indicated." It is true, that there is some uncertainty about the deadline for when to file an appeal, and that it is also somewhat unclear when the request results in a "re-examination" (the Governing Board or a new panel re-examines the existing evidence) or a "re-assessment" (implying a whole new process). But in both cases, the appeal leads to a reconsideration of the assessment. The panel got enough evidence and assurance that procedures are actually in place and known by HEIs, who make use of these procedures and have trust in the system, considered as working properly. That leads the panel to consider this standard as substantial compliant, as the spirit of this standard is followed in practice and institutions can formally question the outcomes of the assessments and even be reassessed.

That being said, this procedure might be improved by establishing an internal reviewing process by a body which acts independently, and processes should be better defined in the guidelines for all activities.

Panel recommendation

The panel recommends to make more transparent and accessible the existing internal mechanisms, the actors involved and the detailed procedure of both complaints and appeals, respectively against procedural issues and against all decisions.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

ANVUR might envisage considering some sort of independent standing body with specific competences to review the consistency and potential flaws of ANVUR's final decisions, aiming at clearly dissociating the re-examination procedure from the decision-making procedure.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

CURRENT SYSTEM

With the exception of the AVA periodic accreditation system implemented at universities, accreditation in Italy seems designed to guarantee that HEIs and programmes meet the minimum organizational, financial, procedural and logistic inputs, whereas the effective evaluation of qualitative output factors seems not yet or not enough developed. The system seems to be focused to guarantee that HEI possess those input factors required for QA (namely Faculty qualification), or quantitative outputs factors (namely in research publications), rather than of the results of QA processes. The system proves to be mature enough to deserve a meaningful change of paradigm, as it was so coherently done in the AVA system.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

During the last 10 years much focus was given on regulatory measures and the system improved a lot. Now the new paradigm is to allocate more autonomy on HEIs. Currently the system is able to collect data of quantitative and qualitative indicators, representing a big source of information that gives opportunities at political level to develop strategies to improve the quality of the system based on reliable information. It might be then necessary to further sharpen the differentiation between internal and external QA and the consequential sharing of responsibilities between ANVUR and HEIs. For example, the regulatory framework in which ANVUR operates includes activities which in other countries might be taken up by HEI themselves as part of their internal QA system (the quality evaluation of teaching staff before they can be hired, or changes in programmes in between accreditation rounds).

DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

The review panel wishes to highlight some examples of practices that are not related to specific ESGs, showing ANVUR's commitment to system-wide developmental projects:

- Recently ANVUR launched a working group whose outcome is the new set of teaching indicators (and predefined benchmarks) made available to all study programmes in 2017 and developed further in 2018, allowing coordinators of each programme to compare its performance with an individual set of benchmarks.
- Recently ANVUR launched a working group aiming at the introduction of comparable tests (for both disciplinary competences and transversal skills like literacy, numeracy and problem solving) across the university system at the initial and last year of bachelor programmes, in order to monitor the achievement of the intended learning outcomes across all disciplines.
- With the conclusion of the first cycle of institutional accreditation (AVA) in 2020, ANVUR plans to conduct a survey about the effectiveness and impact of its procedures among HEIs. A working group will be launched for the development of the survey, the analysis of results, the improvements to be implemented.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

The panel would like to make some commendations concerning ANVUR's external assessment activities. These commendations have already been signalled in the previous sections.

Standard 3.4: The panel notes that the Biannual report is the only systemic and reliable statistical and analytical source of information in Italy on HE and research, under the full responsibility of ANVUR. It represents an example of good practice in how to make use of and disseminate the information gathered by an agency in the course of its work.

Standard 2.1: The panel notes that the AVA system is a good example of high qualitative QA work with clear links and coherence between the internal and the external QA systems. It is the result of high ambitions of ANVUR for a meaningful and coherent national QA system, despite the limited available resources.

Standard 2.4: The panel finds the establishment and management of the public experts' register and the quality of trainings a commendable practice.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND JUDGEMENTS

Standard 3.1: The panel recommends to ANVUR's Management Team to explore ways enabling to increase the strategic involvement of the Advisory Board.

Standard 3.1: The panel recommends to plan a more systematic formal dialogue between ANVUR and specific stakeholders (students, professional organisations, social partners) to collect feedback to be effectively beneficial for its governance and work.

Standard 3.3: The panel recommends ANVUR to strive for more autonomy in setting the timetable and therefore define the procedures more freely (particularly in AFAM accreditations) aiming at improving the quality and meaningfulness of the external quality activities.

Standard 3.4: The panel recommends the systematic publication of any outcomes resulting from thematic working groups' activities conducted by ANVUR.

Standard 3.5: The panel recommends to establish priorities with regards to the development of meaningful processes and procedures, compatible with the available resources.

Standard 3.5: The panel also recommends to open a reflection on the revision of the organizational structure of the agency, including an evaluation about to what extent – in a medium to long term perspective – it would still be considered the most optimal use of resources to reserve a relatively large percentage of the budget to the full-time engagement of the governing board members.

Standard 3.5: The panel recommends to enhance IT resources for the use of software applications and to provide support to all of the agency's activities.

Standard 3.6: The panel recommends to introduce a system aiming at formalizing processes assuring that external feedback is collected systematically and leads to a continuous improvement within the agency.

Standard 2.1: The panel recommends to extend consideration of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG to all of ANVUR's external QA activities falling within the scope of the ESG.

Standard 2.2: The panel recommends ANVUR to introduce and continue efforts aiming at a formal and concrete systematic involvement of student organizations – and the student body in general – in the design and enhancement of its activities.

Standard 2.2: The panel recommends ANVUR to further involve AFAM stakeholders in the design and continuous improvement of ANVUR's external QA activities in the AFAM sector.

Standard 2.3: The panel recommends to increase the usefulness of the AFAM accreditation system implementing processes compatible with the AVA system and adapted to the AFAM institutional context.

Standard 2.4: The panel recommends to involve student experts in all external quality assurance activities.

Standard 2.6: The panel recommends to publish full reports by the experts not only clear and accessible to the academic community but also to external partners and other interested individuals.

Standard 2.7: The panel recommends to make more transparent and accessible the existing internal mechanisms, the actors involved and the detailed procedure of both complaints and appeals, respectively against procedural issues and against all decisions.

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, ANVUR is in compliance with the ESG.

The agency is recommended to take appropriate action to achieve at least substantial compliance in all standards at the earliest opportunity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The panel would like to make some suggestions, extending beyond strictly interpreted ESG, which ANVUR may wish to consider when reflecting on its further development. These suggestions have already been signalled in the previous sections.

Standard 3.1: The panel suggests to activate a working group with clear aims in the AFAM sector, as a possible channel ensuring continuity in the involvement of AFAM stakeholders as long as their representation is not yet formalized in ANVUR's boards.

Standard 3.1: The panel suggests ANVUR to open a reflection with MIUR aiming at finding ways enabling the integration of professionals with AFAM profiles in ANVUR's boards and guaranteeing a better planning of future ANVUR activities in this area, benefitting all actors involved in a gradual development of a culture of quality.

Standard 3.3: The panel suggests to the management Board to increase the flow of information and regular exchange with MIUR in order to be put in the condition of being able to anticipate and better plan its activities in the short and medium term.

Standard 3.5: The panel suggests to continue to strive for increasing its staff units on permanent or long-term contracts and for the renewal of the right to hire non-permanent staff, with longer terms whenever legally possible, as a security measure allowing to continue carrying out its regular activities.

Standard 2.2: The panel suggests to initiate an evaluation, based on art. 2.5 of ANVUR's Regulations, focussing on the AFAM accreditation system and how to develop it based on its fitness for purpose. ANVUR might consider involving external bodies such as MusiQuE or the European association of conservatories (AEC).

Standard 2.4: The panel suggests to proactively involve international experts in external quality assurance activities.

Standard 2.4: The panel suggests to explore ways, ideally involving student organizations, to make calls for and accept student candidates for the experts register more systematically.

Standard 2.4: The panel suggests ANVUR to strive further to promote a higher representativeness of women in expert panels, particularly in the position of president of the panel.

Standard 2.5: The panel suggests that the results of any of the findings arising from individual investigation of Governing Board members are made explicit in the final ANVUR report, assuring full transparency at all steps of the decision-making process.

Standard 2.7: ANVUR might envisage considering some sort of independent standing body with specific competences to review the consistency and potential flaws of ANVUR's final decisions, aiming at clearly dissociating the re-examination procedure from the decision-making procedure.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

[19.11.2018]			
16:45 – 19:15	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for day I		
19:15 – 20:15	Pre-visit meeting Agency contact person	Sandro Momigliano , Director	MAIN ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED clarify elements related to the overall system and context
20:15	Dinner (panel only)		
[20.11.2018]			
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	MAIN ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
8:00 – 8:30	Review panel's private meeting		
8:30 – 9:00	Preliminary meeting Meeting with the team responsible for preparation of the self-assessment report	Sandro Momigliano , Director Alessio Ancaiani , Evaluation of Universities and AFAM Manager Marco Malgarini , Evaluation of Research Manager Alberto Ciolfi , head of AVA unit Cecilia Bibbò , AFAM unit officer Tindaro Cicero , head of Post graduate and ASN unit	(SAR) Panel's approach during the visit
9:00 – 9:55	Interview 1 Meeting with ANVUR's Management Team	Alessio Ancaiani , Evaluation of Universities Manager Marco Malgarini , Evaluation of Research Manager Valter Brancati* , Financial and Administrative Manager Lucia D'Andrea* , head of Human Resources unit <i>*Joshua Charlat, Translator</i>	Strategic & Management issues, internationalisation, resources
9:55 – 10:10	Review panel's private discussion		
10:10 – 11:05	Interview 2-a Meeting with staff of the agency (AVA and AFAM units in the department of the Evaluation of Universities)	Alberto Ciolfi , head of AVA unit Emilia Primeri , AVA unit officer Morena Sabella* , AVA unit officer Cecilia Bibbò , AFAM unit officer Adriano Scaletta , head of PERFORMANCE unit	Procedural reports, thematic analysis, iQA, stakeholder involvement, criteria for assessments, training of experts, procedures fit for the purpose

		Brigida Blasi , head of III MISSION unit <i>*Joshua Charlat, Translator</i>	
11:05 – 11:20	Review panel's private discussion		
11:20 – 12:15	Interview 2-b Meeting with staff of the agency (units of Post Graduate and Evaluation of Research) Including one key-representative of the instance involved in the accreditation of post-graduate medical programmes	Tindaro Cicero , head of Post graduate and ASN unit Antonio Ferrara , Post graduate and ASN unit officer Carmela Anna Nappi , head of Evaluation of Research Quality unit Marco De Santis Puzzonnia , Post graduate and ASN unit officer Rosa Margherita Lacatena , contracted staff, Post graduate analysis Valter Mazucco , Un. Palermo, member of the National Observatory for medical post-graduate education	Procedural reports, thematic analysis, iQA, stakeholder involvement, criteria for assessments, training of experts, procedures fit for the purpose
12:15 – 12:30	Meeting with ANVUR President and chairman of the Governing Board	Paolo Miccoli , President	Strategic issues, independence
12:30 – 13:30	Business Lunch (panel only)		
13:30 – 14:30	Interview 3 CPDS ⁷ representatives (including at least 1 student representative) and Heads of study programmes from recently reviewed institutions/programmes including representatives of AFAM programmes	Berta Martini , head of programme in Primary Education Sciences, Un. Urbino Carlo Bo Enrico Dainese , PQA chairman, former head of programme in Biotechnologies, Un. of Teramo Rossella Di Federico , member of CPDS, Un. Of Teramo Gianfranco Bosco , member of CPDS, Un. Roma Tor Vergata Anila Kruschke , student, member of CPDS Un. Milano Bicocca Fienga Demasi , student, member of CPDS, Un. Cassino Guido Tattoni , head of study programme, NABA Milano (AFAM)	Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA
14:30 – 14:45	Review panel's private discussion		
14:45 – 15:45	Interview 4 Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/HEI representatives, including the new universities that underwent an accreditation and representatives of AFAM institutions	Paolo Collini , Un. of Trento, Rector Giovanni Betta , Un. of Cassino, Rector Giovanni Cannata , Mercatorum Online University, Rector Vilberto Stocchi , Un. of Urbino Carlo Bo, Rector Aurelia Sole , Un. of Basilicata, Rector Adrien Yakimov Roberts , Direttore Didattico, Accademia Costume e Moda di Roma	Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA
15:45 – 16:00	Review panel's private discussion		
16:00 – 17:00	Interview 5	Directorate General – Higher Education planning, coordination and funding:	Design of procedures fit for the purpose; stakeholder involvement; decision-

⁷ Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti.

	Meeting with Italian Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR) representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniele Livon, Director • Angelo Siddi, Planning and evaluation Manager <p>Directorate General – Higher Education students, development and internationalisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Letizia Melina, Director • Federico Cinquepalmi, Higher Education Internationalisation Manager • Vanda Lanzafame, Universities’ educational offer, PhD and National access to professions Manager 	making; politics & policies, internationalization, resources
17:00 – 18:15	Wrap-up meeting among panel members & preparations for day II		
19:30	Dinner (panel only)		
[21.11.2018]			
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	MAIN ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
8:30 – 9.00	Review panel private meeting		
9:00 – 10:00	Interview 6 Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs (chairmans/members of the Independent Evaluation Unit “Nucleo di Valutazione” NdV), including representatives of AFAM institutions	Angela Bergantino , President, CONVUI Cristiano Violani , NdV chairman, Un. of Rome La Sapienza Roberto Moscati , NdV chairman IULM University, Milano Paolo Carbone , NdV member, Un. of Bolzano and Cassino Lorenza Operti , NdV member, Un. of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo (and former PQA chairwoman of Un. of Torino) Sabina Addamiano , NdV member, Conservatory of Genova, Academy of Fine Arts of Genova	Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA, procedures fit for the purpose, instruments, resources
10:00 – 10:15	Review panel’s private discussion		
10:15 – 11:15	Interview 7 Meeting with the Governing Board of ANVUR	Raffaella Rumati , Vice-President Fabio Beltram , member of the Board Daniele Checchi , member of the Board Maria Luisa Meneghetti , member of the Board Susanna Terracini , member of the Board (<i>via Zoom or Skype</i>)	Decision-making, appeals, criteria, methods, budget, links with ministries
11:15 – 11:30	Review panel’s private discussion		
11:30 – 12:30	Interview 8 Meeting with representatives of PQA (the unit responsible for the university internal QA system “Presidio della Qualità”) including administrative and technical staff	Giuseppe Crescenzo* , PQA chairman, Un. of Bari Giuseppe Cirino , PQA member, Un. of Napoli “Federico II” Cherubino Profeta , QA officer, Un. of Bocconi Milano Evelina Lamma , PQA chairwoman of University of Ferrara	Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA, procedures fit for the purpose, relevance of indicators, instruments, resources

		<p>Donatella Marsiglia PQA member (administrative staff), Campus Biomedico University of Rome</p> <p>Elsa Serpico PQA member (administrative staff), Campus Biomedico University of Rome</p> <p><i>*Joshua Charlat, Translator</i></p>	
12:30 – 13:30	Business Lunch (panel only)		
13:30 – 14:30	<p>Interview 9</p> <p>Meeting with student representatives</p>	<p>Student Experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samin Sedghi Zadeh <p>Student members of the Independent Evaluation Unit (NdV):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riccardo Fantini, Un. of Modena e Reggio Emilia • Michele Ciruzzi, Un. of Torino <p>Student designated members of PQA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michele Chiusano, Un. of Bari <p>Students involved in CPDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valentina Marsella, Un. Roma Tor Vergata • Romeo Palermo, Polytechnic Institute of Torino <p>Student involved in the AFAM survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giorgio Perri, prog. <i>Interaction Design</i>, Ist. Quasar Roma 	Measures and impact of student involvement in internal and external QA, Accreditation system, pros and cons, procedures fit for the purpose, relevance of indicators, instruments, resources
14:30 – 14:45	Review panel's private discussion		
14:45 – 15:45	<p>Interview 10</p> <p>Meeting with stakeholders</p>	<p>Gaetano Manfredi, Chairman, Board of Rectors of IT Universities (CRUI)</p> <p>Alberto Scuttari, member, Conference of University Directors (CODAU)</p> <p>Carla Barbati, President, National University Council (CUN)</p> <p>Alfonso Balsamo, Confindustria, Labour mkt, welfare, human capital area</p> <p>Alessandra Petrucci, Chairwoman, ANVUR Advisory Board</p> <p>Mattia Sguazzini, student member, ANVUR Advisory Board</p> <p>Andrea Lapicciarella, Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro, ANVUR Advisory Board</p>	Relevance of stakeholder involvement, Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA, thematic analysis & future prospects
15:45 – 16:00	Review panel's private discussion		
16:00 – 17:00	<p>Interview 11</p> <p>Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool, including experts involved in accreditation of new universities, in the AFAM accreditations (Register of AFAM Experts), in the PhD programmes and in the postgraduate medical programmes</p>	<p>QA System Experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muzio Gola, Polytechnic Institute of Torino • Fausto Fantini, Un. of Modena e Reggio Emilia <p>Disciplinary Experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michela Cigola, Un. of Cassino <p>Student Experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierluigi Toma, Un. of Salento 	Accreditation system, pros and cons, impact of internal-external QA, procedures fit for the purpose, relevance of indicators, instruments, training of experts, independence

		E-learning Expert: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tommaso Minerva, Un. of Modena and Reggio Emilia AFAM Expert: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrell Stone, Conservatory of Vicenza 	
17:00 – 18:15	Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day III and provisional conclusions		
19:30	Dinner (panel only)		
[22.11.2018]			
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	MAIN ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
8:30 – 9:00	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify		
9:00 – 10:00	Interview 12 Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues	Sandro Momigliano , Director Alessio Ancaiani , Evaluation of Universities and AFAM Manager	Open questions
10:00 – 12:15	Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings		Degree of compliance with ESG
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch (panel only)		
13:30 – 14:30	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	All the previously involved staff members and the Governing Board of ANVUR	Profile of strengths and areas of improvement

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

External review of the (Italian) National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR)
by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

March 2018

1. Background and Context

The Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR), established by the Presidential Decree 76/2010, is an independent public body which, among its various tasks, oversees the national public quality assessment system for public and private universities and is responsible for the institutional and programme assessment and accreditation.

The QA system has been introduced in Italy by the Law 240/2010 and the Legislative Decree n. 19/2012. Following this legislation, the Agency has developed its own assessment criteria, methodologies and procedures to fulfill its tasks, in strict adherence to Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

To date, the higher education institutions participating to the system are 97, divided as follows: 61 public universities, 19 private universities, 11 private distance-universities (e-learning programmes only), 6 special tertiary education schools.

The QA system is called AVA (*Autovalutazione, Valutazione periodica, Accreditemento* - Self-assessment, Periodic Evaluation, Accreditation) and is operational since 2013. AVA provides for the self-assessment by programmes and institutions, concerning their internal procedures and the outcomes of their activities, and an external assessment of the quality assurance systems by ANVUR, based on site visits and document analysis. In its institutional assessment, ANVUR performs *inter alia* a detailed examination of a sample of Departments and programmes. In each institution the internal Quality Assurance (QA) key actors are the following: the *Nucleo di Valutazione* (Independent Evaluation Unit), the *Commissioni paritetiche docenti-studenti* (Joint Teaching-Student Committees), the *Presidio di Qualità* (Unit responsible for the internal QA system).

Moreover, ANVUR carries out other activities concerning tertiary education programmes and institutions; however, these tasks are assigned by specific pieces of legislation, which do not refer to QA and to the ESG. More specifically, accreditation of PhD Programmes takes place through an analysis of a number of indicators, concerning the research quality of the PhD Board and the overall scientific profile of the project. Accreditation of Post Graduate Medical Schools, on the other hand, it is a complex process, involving different actors, including: the Ministry of Health; its agency, AGENAS, which is in charge of assessing the quality of the medical facilities of the Schools; the Ministry of Education and Research; ANVUR, which is in charge of evaluating the scientific quality of the Schools' Board. Finally, the Institutional and Programme Accreditation of Arts and Music Institutions is limited to a specific subset of institutions or programmes.

ANVUR has been an affiliate of ENQA since September 2013 and is applying for ENQA membership. ANVUR is also applying for registration on EQAR.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review will evaluate the way in which and to what extent ANVUR fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of ANVUR should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support ANVUR application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

2.1 Activities of ANVUR within the scope of the ESG

In order for ANVUR to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all ANVUR activities that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of ANVUR have to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of new programmes;
- Accreditation of new Higher Education Institutions;
- Periodic assessment of accredited Institutions;
- Periodic assessment of accredited programmes;
- Authorization of PhD Programmes;
- Authorization of Post-Graduate Medical Programmes;
- Institutional and Programme Accreditation of Arts and Music Institutions.

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

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-assessment by ANVUR including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to ANVUR;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- 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, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review

panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case, an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

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

ENQA will provide ANVUR with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards ANVUR review.

3.2 Self-assessment by ANVUR, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

ANVUR is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ANVUR fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre- scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre- scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

ANVUR will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. 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 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to ANVUR at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by ANVUR in arriving in Rome, Italy.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on compliance or granting of ENQA membership.

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 articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to ANVUR within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ANVUR 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 ANVUR, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

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

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

ANVUR is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which ANVUR expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

ANVUR will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. ANVUR commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by ANVUR. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

5. Use of the report

ENQA 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 ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether ANVUR has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report

will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to ANVUR and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by ANVUR, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. ANVUR may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

6. Budget

ANVUR shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, ANVUR will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget and will refund the difference to ANVUR if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	March 2018
Appointment of review panel members	June/July 2018
Self-assessment completed	By July 2018
Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator	August 2018
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	September 2018
Briefing of review panel members	October 2018
Review panel site visit	November 2018
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	By January 2019
Draft of evaluation report to ANVUR	January/February 2019
Statement of ANVUR to review panel if necessary	February 2019
Submission of final report to ENQA	March 2019
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of ANVUR	April 2019
Publication of the report	April 2019

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

AFAM	Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica (Higher Education in Art, Music and Dance)
AVA	Autovalutazione, accreditamento e valutazione del sistema universitario italiano (Self-assessment, Periodic Evaluation, Accreditation)
CEV	Comitato Esperti Valutazione (Panel of experts for external QA assessments)
CPDS	Commissione Paritetica Docenti-Studenti (Joint Teaching-Student Committee)
EQAR	The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015
ESU	The European Students' Union
EUA	The European University Association
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
MIUR	Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Higher Education and Research)
NdV	Nucleo di Valutazione (Evaluation unit)
PQA	Presidio Qualità di Ateneo (University Quality Presidium)
QA	Quality assurance
SAR	Self-assessment report

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY ANVUR ANNEXED TO THE SAR

- Letters from Rectors after the on-site visits
- English summary of the “Biannual Report on the state of University and Research 2018”.
- English translation of AVA guidelines: Periodic accreditation of Universities and academic programmes guidelines
- English translation of: Periodic accreditation Report – Teramo University (2018)
- English translation of: Periodic accreditation Report – Pegaso Online University (2018)
- English translation of Annex 1 of AVA guidelines – brief description of procedures concerning periodic accreditation of Universities

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY ANVUR ON REQUEST OF THE PANEL PRIOR THE VISIT

General pieces of documentation:

- number of staff as a whole and an overview of staff distributed in ANVUR’s units/departments;
- an example of ANVUR’s training package for experts;
- 2 examples of NdVs annual reports transmitted to ANVUR;
- examples of site-visit programme for assessment activities within AVA and AFAM;
- ANVUR annual activity plan 2017 and 2018;
- ANVUR’s mission statement, including explicit goals and objectives;
- examples of Working Group outputs.

ANVUR guidelines:

- Guidelines for the accreditation of PhD Programmes;
- AFAM Guidelines for the accreditation of first cycle diploma;
- AFAM Guidelines for the accreditation of second cycle diploma.

Assessment reports:

- 3 examples of expert reports for the periodic accreditation of universities;
- 2 examples of expert reports for the Initial accreditation of academic programmes;
- 2 examples of expert reports within AFAM accreditation;
- 2 examples of ANVUR reports within AFAM accreditation;
- 3 examples of ANVUR reports for the accreditation of PhD Programmes.

Deliberations on decisions:

- the 3 last ANVUR deliberations concerning the Initial accreditation of academic programmes;
- link to MIUR decrees concerning periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes;
- 2 examples of MIUR decrees for periodic accreditation of universities;
- 2 examples of MIUR decrees for new programme accreditation (one decree per university, including decisions for all new programmes);
- 2 examples of MIUR decrees for AFAM accreditations.

Lists of all concrete accreditations/assessments conducted by ANVUR in 2016-2018 (specifying if an on-site visit was conducted and the final outcome: yes/no/conditional and score if applicable) of:

- initial accreditation of academic programmes;
- periodic accreditation of universities and academic programmes;
- initial and periodic accreditation of AFAM programmes (1. and 2. cycle);

- accreditation of PhD Programmes.

Appeals:

- list of appeals against an assessment made by ANVUR in 2016, 2017 and 2018;
- list of procedures in which MIUR asked ANVUR to revise an assessment in 2016, 2017 and 2018;
- list of complaints that Anvur received, that lead to the involvement of a judge, in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

- ANVUR's website;
- MIUR's website.



THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR), undertaken in 2018.



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