

# SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023



Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione  
del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

National Agency for the Evaluation  
of Universities and Research Institutes



# Self-Assessment Report

External review against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) for renewal of membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and application for registration with the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

*November 2023*



Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione  
del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

National Agency for the Evaluation  
of Universities and Research Institutes

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# 1. Introduction

The second external review of the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) takes place during a time of major changes in the field of higher education and research, both at the national, European, and international levels. It also comes at the end of a five-year period in which ANVUR has dedicated substantial efforts to implementing the recommendations received by ENQA and EQAR and to completing, reviewing, and updating its evaluation procedures, with the aim of achieving full compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

During the last five-year period ANVUR underwent governance renewal. A new Director, Daniele Livon, took office in June 2019, followed by the appointment of Antonio Felice Uricchio as the new President in December 2019. Additionally, in April 2020 four new members joined the Governing Board for a six-year term: Alessandra Celletti, Marilena Maniaci, Menico Rizzi, and Massimo Tronci. In the same year ANVUR also established a new Advisory Board comprising representatives from highly qualified national and international stakeholders. These changes, coupled with shifts in staff numbers and evolving responsibilities, necessitated a revision of the Agency's organisational model.

The year 2020 brought significant challenges for ANVUR due to the strong impact of COVID-19 on its daily operations and evaluation procedures, and the Agency had to quickly adapt by transitioning to online methods and tools. The profound transformations in the economy, society, culture, and education, accelerated by the pandemic, presented novel issues and challenges for ANVUR. Consequently, the Agency has updated its mission, vision, and development plans to accommodate this rapidly changing environment.

Between 2019 and 2023, Italy also experienced three changes of government, resulting in the turnover of five different Ministers of University and Research. While this situation has not hindered fruitful dialogue, it has inevitably slowed down the achievement of certain strategic objectives for the Agency.

In this rapidly and profoundly evolving context, ANVUR recognizes self-assessment as a crucial instrument for monitoring the compliance of its evaluation methods, processes, and tools with the ESG. This Self-Assessment Report (SAR) represents the culmination of a comprehensive analysis process, guided by the recommendations received from ENQA in 2019 and EQAR in 2020 and by the ENQA progress visit voluntarily undertaken by ANVUR in 2021. The report strives to share the progress made in the last five years and identify areas for further improvement. It aims at describing the Agency's operating context, its QA activities, its development priorities, and the measures taken to enhance its standing among QA agencies in the European higher education area and the wider international context.

## 2. Development of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The present Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is being submitted to support the renewal of ANVUR's ENQA membership, which was obtained in 2019, as well as the application for inclusion in the EQAR register. The SAR is the outcome of a collaborative and inclusive effort, built upon extensive reflection.

In 2019, shortly after ANVUR became a member of ENQA, the Director and the Governing Board, supported by officers from various Agency's areas, analysed the recommendations provided by the ENQA Board and the EQAR Register Committee. The goal was to identify the necessary actions to be undertaken in the subsequent years to ensure full alignment of the Agency's procedures with the ESG.

In September 2021, ANVUR availed itself of the opportunity offered by ENQA to undergo a voluntary "progress visit", aimed at providing an update on the actions taken to address the critical remarks received from both ENQA and EQAR. The main topics discussed with the experts during this visit were the establishment of a comprehensive QA system for the AFAM sector, the accreditation of university PhD programmes, and the development of a new and independent complaints procedure. The preparation of the mandatory *Follow-up report*, which was approved by the ENQA Board in December 2021, provided a valuable opportunity to assess the progress made thus far and to plan the remaining work ahead.

The drafting of this SAR was coordinated by a working group composed of Marilena Maniaci (Governing Board member, delegate for international relations and for the evaluation of AFAM institutions), Daniele Livon (Director of ANVUR), Alessio Ancaiani and Marco Malgarini (Managers of the Higher Education Institutions and Research Evaluation areas), Simone Via and Emilia Primeri (ANVUR officers, Internationalisation project unit), Giuseppe Carci, Tindaro Cicero and Morena Sabella (officers responsible for the AFAM, PhD and AVA units), Licia Romano (external consultant). In order to share the review purpose, process and timeline from its very beginning, a presentation to the Agency's personnel was held in November 2022. The group discussed the work plan, the division of tasks and how to involve stakeholders. It then performed an in-depth analysis of all ANVUR's QA activities, with particular attention to those falling within the scope of the ESG and to their compliance with them. Based on this preliminary work and including the contribution of other staff members in relation to their specific competences, a first draft of the SAR was produced (*version 1*), that was discussed and improved by the Governing Board. A more advanced stage of the document (*version 2*) was then shared with a wide panel of representatives of external stakeholders, who were invited to send their feedback through a dedicated questionnaire. The text was also submitted to ANVUR's Advisory Board and personnel, to collect comments and suggestions for further improvement.

The current and final version (*version 3*) of the SAR, incorporating both internal and external suggestions, has been discussed and approved by the ANVUR Governing Board on October 13, 2023.

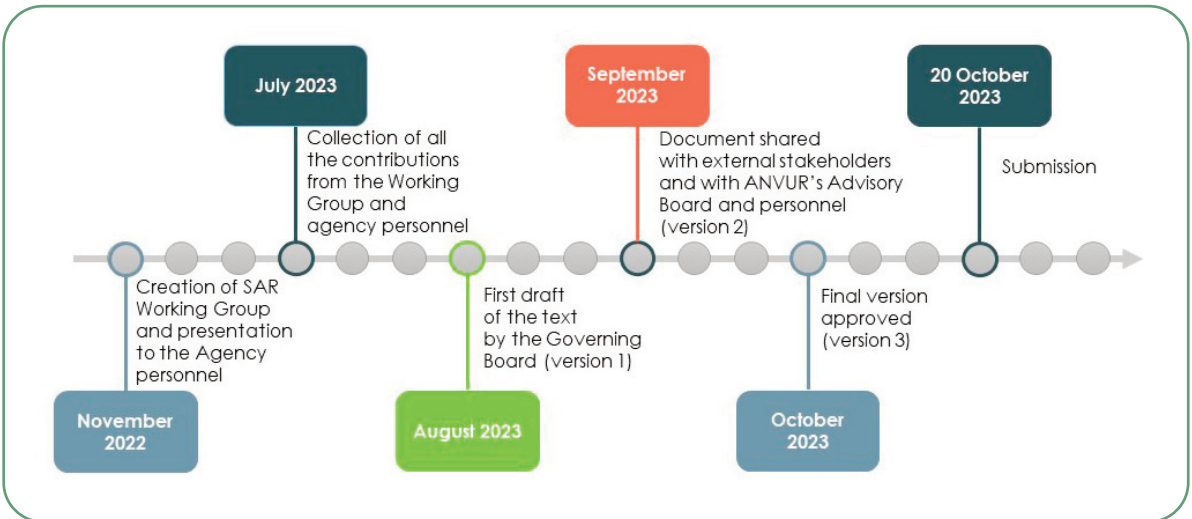


Figure 1 The stages and times of preparation of the report

### 3. Higher education and QA of higher education in the context of the Agency

The Italian higher education system is comprised of two major sectors, each governed by distinct legislative provisions: the University sector and the Higher Education in the Arts, Music, and Dance sector, commonly referred to as AFAM (Fig. 2).

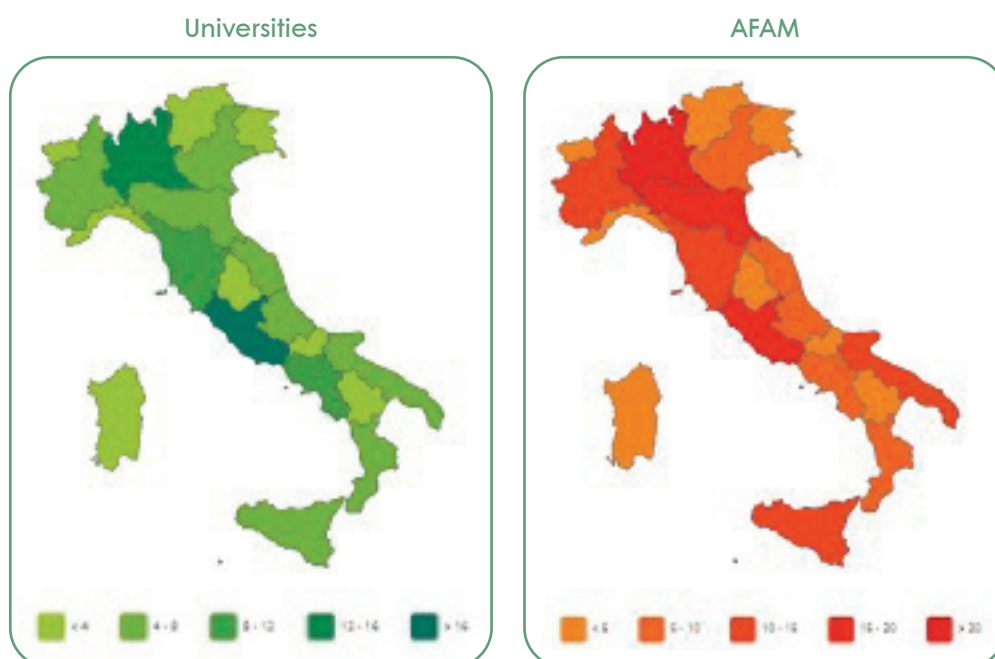


Figure 2 Geographical distribution of 99 Universities and 159 AFAM Institutions

The Italian Qualifications Framework for Higher Education encompasses for both sectors three main cycles, in accordance with the Bologna Process (Fig. 3).

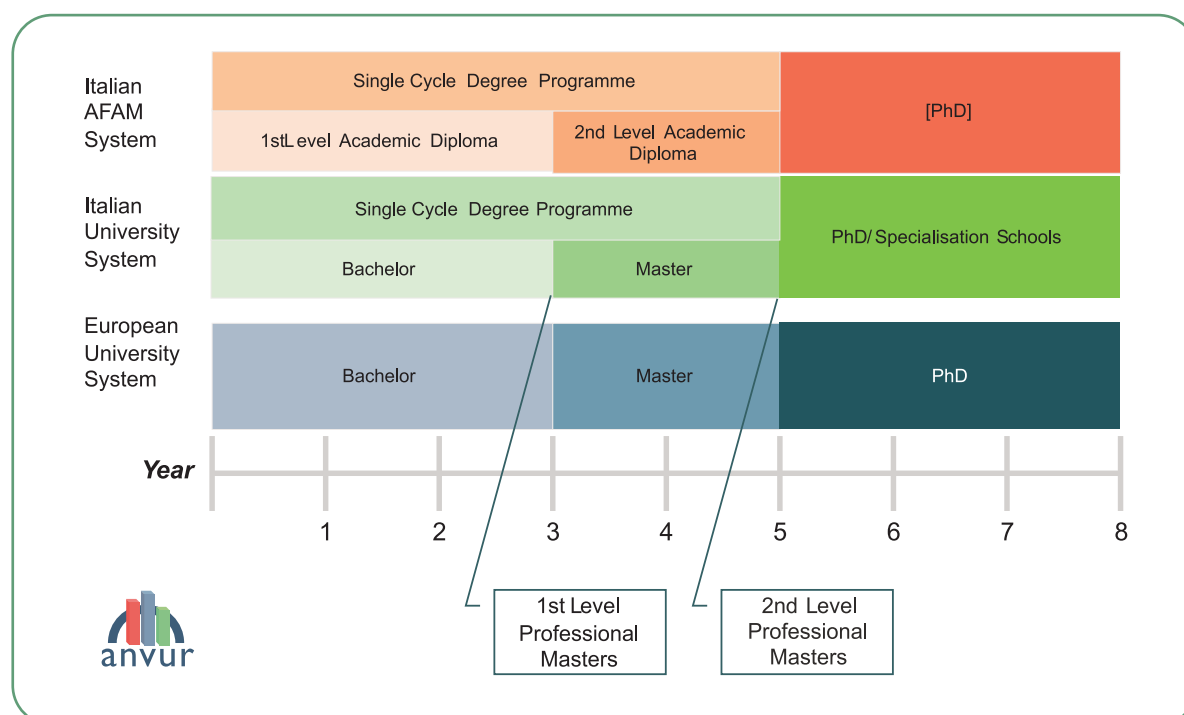


Figure 3 Italian Qualifications Framework (Quadro dei Titoli Italiani - QTI)

### 3.1 The University system

As of 2023, the Italian university system comprises 99 institutions, with 68 being public institutions and 31 being private institutions (all listed at <http://cercauniversita.cineca.it>). Among the public institutions, there are 61 universities (including 3 polytechnics) and 7 Schools of Advanced Studies (SAS) that primarily focus on doctoral programmes. As for private institutions, 20 out of the 31 private universities offer in-person learning, while the remaining 11 provide distance learning. The universities are geographically distributed across the country, with 34 located in the North, 33 in the Centre, 26 in the South, and 6 in Sicily and Sardinia. These institutions vary significantly in terms of size and the range of educational programmes they offer.

Geographic area	Public universities	Polytechnics	Schools of Advanced Studies	In-person private universities	Distance learning private universities	Total
North-West	9	2	1	8	1	21
North-East	11		1	1		13
Centre	16		3	7	7	33
South	17	1	2	3	3	26
Islands	5			1		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>99</b>

*Table 1 Distribution of universities by territorial area (year 2023)*

#### Students

The total student enrolment in the Italian university system exceeds two million, with over 60,000 teaching staff units and approximately 55,000 administrative personnel units. Six universities have more than 60,000 students each, namely Sapienza University of Rome, Bologna, Turin, Naples Federico II, Padua, and Milan State University. Additionally, 36 universities have enrolments ranging between 10,000 and 29,999 students and 13 count between 30,000 and 59,999 students, while 44 institutions, including the 7 SAS, have fewer than 10,000 students.

The university system follows a three-cycle structure. The first two cycles are known as "Laurea triennale" (L, three-year bachelor degree programme, EQF 6 level) and "Laurea magistrale" (LM, two-year master degree programme, EQF 7 level); in certain fields, such as medical programmes (medicine and surgery, dentistry and dental prosthodontics, veterinary medicine), pharmacy and pharmaceutical chemistry, architecture, law, primary education, and conservation and restoration of cultural heritage the teaching is organised as a single five- or six-year cycle called "Laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" (LMCU, single-cycle degree programme), which combines both the bachelor's and master's degree components. The third cycle of the Italian university system (at EQF level 8) encompasses post-graduate PhD programmes that last a minimum of three years, as well as specialised schools in medical, veterinary, cultural, psychological, and legal areas. These programmes prepare students for advanced research and professional careers in specific fields.

While most degree programmes are delivered through on-campus instruction, distance learning programmes are also available, primarily offered by online universities. Each of the three cycles is associated with specific academic qualifications, enabling students to advance in their studies, participate in public recruitment competitions, and pursue careers in various professions.

Universities may also offer lifelong learning professional courses, referred to as first- and second-level "masters", which aim to provide upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning opportunities. These professional courses are currently not accredited by ANVUR.

In academic year 2021-2022, there were a total of 5,180 study programmes offered at the national level for the first two cycles (2,484 L, 2,342 LM, and 354 LMCU programmes). Additionally, there were 1,054 PhD programmes (with approximately 37,000 students). The number of PhD programmes has increased to 1,219 in the 2023/2024 academic year, also due to the additional funding provided by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) until 2026.



University study programmes are structured in university educational credits. The CFU system is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Each credit (known as "credito formativo universitario", CFU) is typically equivalent to 25 hours of student activities, including lectures, exercises, lab practical, seminars, and individual study. The workload of a full-time student in one academic year is conventionally set at 60 CFU. This represents the average quantity of academic work expected from a student during that period. Bachelor's and master's degree programmes with similar educational goals and activities are grouped into "degree classes." Each university has the autonomy to determine the educational content of its degree programmes. However, certain activities and the corresponding number of CFU are defined at the national level for each degree class; these predetermined activities ensure a standardised educational experience within the same degree class. Qualifications obtained within the same degree class hold the same legal value. The degree classes are currently being revised by the Ministry, to increase the flexibility of the system, also with the aim of facilitating the implementation of international study programmes. In summary, the CFU system, which is equivalent to the ECTS system, allows universities to assign credits to different educational activities, and these credits are accumulated by students as they progress through their degree programmes. The degree classes provide a framework for organising and classifying similar bachelor's and master's degree programmes, ensuring consistency and comparability across universities.

Italian universities may offer joint programmes in collaboration with other universities, both in Italy and internationally (also within the framework of the European Alliances initiative). These collaborations can take the form of joint degrees or, more commonly, double or multiple degrees. In addition, Italian universities may establish decentralised branches abroad, that operate under the jurisdiction and QA standards of the Italian higher education system and are required to undergo national accreditation by ANVUR. Conversely, foreign universities can also establish subsidiary branches in Italy after initial authorisation by the Ministry, based on a technical report prepared by ANVUR; they can only provide for part of their curricula (not entire programmes). The recognition of academic titles awarded by them, in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, is subject to a specific accreditation process (as established by [Ministerial Decree no. 214/2004](#)).

In accordance with [Law no. 240/2010](#), [Legislative Decree no. 19/2012](#) introduced a system of initial and periodic evaluation for universities and study programmes. Since then, QA in higher education has been ensured through a combination of internal and external assessment procedures. The university QA system, known as AVA (*Autovalutazione, Valutazione periodica, Accreditamento* = Self-assessment, Periodic Assessment, Accreditation), has been in operation since 2013 (the first procedures were conducted at the end of 2014). The AVA system establishes standards for self-assessment within universities and their study programmes – encompassing internal procedures and the outcomes of the activities carried out – and for external assessment by ANVUR, which is mandatory for all institutions, both public and private. ANVUR assesses both universities and their study programmes, through "initial accreditation" and "periodic assessment and accreditation" (hereinafter also referred to as "periodic assessment") procedures. These procedures are mostly conducted through peer review by panels of experts appointed by the Agency's Governing Board. For initial accreditation, the assessment process may involve either desk analysis alone or a combination of desk analysis and a site visit, depending on the procedure and type of university/programme being assessed; in the periodic assessment and accreditation procedure the site visit is always mandatory. The Ministry of University and Research grants or denies accreditation in accordance with the outcome of ANVUR's assessment procedures and the final resolution of the Governing Board.

In summary, the AVA system incorporates both internal self-assessment and external assessment by ANVUR to ensure QA in higher education. ANVUR plays a central role in conducting accreditation procedures, with the final decision being made by the Ministry of University and Research, but in accordance with ANVUR's resolution (which the Ministry can request to review only once; see [par. 6.7](#)).

## 3.2 The AFAM system

AFAM Institutions are higher education institutions that engage in teaching, artistic production and research activities in the fields of fine arts, music, dance. As to 2022 the AFAM system included 159 institutions, comprising 86 public and 73 private institutions of various types. The public offer comprises 20 academies of fine arts, 59 music conservatories, 5 higher institutes for artistic industries,

International  
study offer

QA system

AFAM  
institutions

## Students

a national academy of dance and a national academy of dramatic art. Private institutions include 37 institutions primarily operating in the fields of fine arts, design, fashion, music, theatre and new technologies, authorised by the Ministry to issue legally recognised qualifications according to **Presidential Decree no. 212/2005**, and also 18 legally recognised academies and 18 private music institutions promoted by local authorities (22 of which have since been transformed into public institutions in 2023). AFAM institutions are significantly numerous but very diverse, differing in their types, breadth of the programme offerings, and student populations.

The global number of AFAM students is approximately 80,000, with nearly half enrolled in fine art academies, and around 35% in music institutions. Over two-thirds of the institutions have fewer than 500 enrolled students, and only 6 have over two thousand. AFAM teaching staff amounts at over 8,500 units, while the administrative staff, with approximately 3,500 personnel units, is undersized. Over the past five years there has been a notable increase in total enrolment, particularly with a considerable proportion of foreign students (15,7%, compared to approximately 5% in universities).

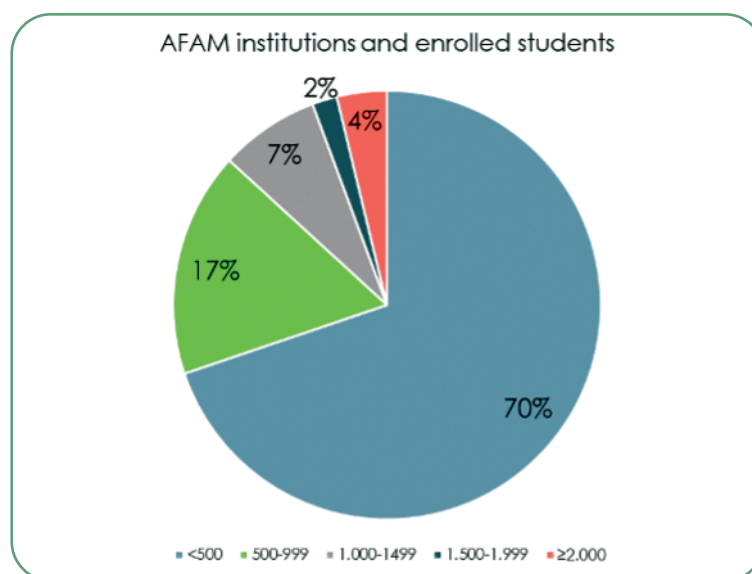


Figure 4 Number of students enrolled in AFAM institutions (a.y. 2022)

## Programmes & degrees

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, **Law no. 508/1999** reformed the realm of higher artistic education, aligning it with the Bologna process and the university qualification system. The reformation resulted in a three-cycle structure for artistic education. The first cycle entails a three-year academic diploma programme (known as "Diploma accademico di I livello", at the EQF 6 level). The second cycle consists of a two-year academic diploma programme (called "Diploma accademico di II livello", at the EQF 7 level). A single five-year cycle is established for the field of Restoration. Additionally, a third cycle (EQF 8 level) encompasses artistic PhD programmes, whose regulation is currently being developed, and postgraduate specialisation programmes. AFAM institutions, like universities, have the option to offer first- and second-level professionally specialised courses, also known as "masters". Since 1999, academic degrees obtained from AFAM institutions are considered fully equivalent to university degrees; moreover, credits earned through AFAM programmes are recognised within university degree programmes.

Over the past decade, Italian artistic higher education has experienced substantial growth. In the academic year 2021/2022 AFAM institutions offered a total of 5,140 academic diploma programmes. This figure comprises 2,783 first-cycle programmes and 2,349 second-cycle programmes (which include 8 single-cycle programmes dedicated to the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage).

AFAM study programmes also follow a credit-based system, utilising so-called academic credits ("credito formativo accademico", CFA), which are measured in the same manner as university credits and are equivalent to ECTS credits. Like in the university system, AFAM academic diplomas are also organised into classes.

Law no. 508/1999 not only outlines the principles and criteria for organising the AFAM system but also mandates the Ministry to adopt a regulation for evaluating AFAM institutions, with the goal of establishing a comprehensive quality assurance system similar to that developed for the university system. In the absence of this regulation, which has not yet been finalised, **Presidential Decree no. 212/2005**, along with a series of subsequent ministerial decrees and notes, has gradually assigned specific responsibilities to ANVUR, that include conducting initial and periodic assessment of private institutions and their first-level and second-level diploma programmes. The evaluation mandate for public institutions is instead limited to second-cycle diploma programmes (**Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018**) and the establishment of decentralised branches (**Ministerial Decree no. 1214/2021**). A pilot project has recently been initiated to test a framework for the periodic assessment of public institutions and their study programmes, based on ESG-compliant requirements and procedures (see **par. 6.3**).

As it happens with universities, the Ministry of University and Research is responsible for making the final accreditation decision, based on the results of ANVUR's assessment procedures and the resolution of the ANVUR Governing Board.

#### Supporting evidence

- According to Art. 2 of **Law no. 4/1999**, foreign universities can establish subsidiary branches in Italy after initial authorisation by the Ministry, based on a technical report prepared by ANVUR, but they can only provide for part of their curricula and not entire programmes.
- **Law no. 508/1999** defines the organization of AFAM higher education into three cycles. It incorporates provisions for the implementation of a Regulation for the evaluation of AFAM institutions.
- Art. 5, par. 1, sub a and par. 3 of **Law no. 240/2010** establish that quality assurance in higher education is guaranteed through a combination of internal and external assessment procedures.
- **Decree no. 214/2004** defines the criteria and procedures for the establishment of foreign higher education institutions operating in Italy and the recognizing the academic qualifications they issue.
- **Presidential Decrees no. 212/2005** and **Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018** define ANVUR's role in the initial and periodic evaluation of AFAM Institutions.
- **Legislative decree 19/2012** implemented **Law no. 240/210** by defining detailed regulations and assigning ANVUR the task of developing a system consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- **Ministerial Decree 14/2018** and **Ministerial Decree 1214/2021** partially expanded ANVUR's mandate to encompass public institutions, specifically regarding second-cycle diploma programs and decentralized branches.

## 4. History, profile and activities of the Agency

### 4.1 History, mission, values, strategic objectives

#### History

ANVUR is the independent national Agency responsible for quality assurance in universities, research institutes and AFAM institutions. The Agency was established by **Decree Law no. 262/2006**, but its structure and organisation were formally defined four years later by **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**. ANVUR began its operations in 2011, marking the culmination of a multi-annual reform process that aimed to strike a balance between the autonomy granted to universities under **Law no. 168/1989** and the implementation of internal and external QA procedures, designed to monitor and enhance the teaching and research activities of the institutions.

ANVUR is an independent legal public body that possesses organisational, administrative, financial and accounting autonomy. Following the establishment of the QA system in Italy through **Law no. 240/2010** and **Legislative Decree no. 19/2012**, along with subsequent ministerial decrees, it has developed its own criteria, methodologies and procedures to fulfil its responsibilities, in line with the ESG. ANVUR became a member of ENQA in June 2019.

#### Mandate

ANVUR's mandate encompasses both the initial and periodic accreditation of universities and their study programmes, as well as the periodic (five-year) evaluation of research outputs and third mission/knowledge valorisation activities conducted by universities and research institutes. Additionally, ANVUR is responsible for defining indicators and benchmarks at the Ministry's request; these are used for allocating of public funding, assessing its effectiveness and efficiency, and for other purposes, such as classifying scientific journals for the National Scientific Qualification procedure. ANVUR is also mandated to coordinate the internal QA work carried out by the University Evaluation Boards, to develop uniform procedures for the collection of student opinions and to evaluate performance plans drafted by universities and research institutes. The Agency's role in accrediting AFAM institutions and study programmes is progressively expanding to cover both the private and public sectors; it also includes, as for the universities, the coordination of the internal QA activities of the AFAM Evaluation Boards. In addition to its domestic responsibilities, ANVUR also cooperates with EU and international bodies, agencies and administrations involved in higher education QA and in research evaluation. The Agency engages in international debates on QA and produces thematic reports and research contributions as part of its institutional commitment.

Under Italian legislation, ANVUR is currently not formally authorised to operate beyond national borders, except for the accreditation of university programmes offered by Italian universities abroad (in this context, ANVUR's role is fully equivalent to its operations within Italy).

ANVUR is committed to conducting its activities in line with its core values, as outlined in its **Code of Ethics**. These values include independence, impartiality, professionalism, confidentiality, and transparency.

#### Supporting evidence

- **Law no. 168/1989** establishes the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research (MURST), now known as Ministry of University and Research (MUR), established through **Decree-Law no. 1/2020**, converted with amendments by **Law 12/2020**.
- Article 2, paragraphs 138 to 141 of **Decree Law 262/2006** converted into **Law 286/2006** establishes the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR) as a public legal entity.
- **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** formally establishes the Italian National agency for the evaluation of universities and research institutes.
- **Law no. 240/2010** establishes that quality assurance in higher education is guaranteed through a combination of internal and external assessment procedures; **Legislative Decree no. 19/2012** introduces the AVA system.
- ANVUR **Code of Ethics** serves as a framework for ethical decision-making, offering guidance on moral standards and responsibilities for both ANVUR's staff and experts. It is based on the principles set forth in art. 2, 1 of **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**.

## 4.2 Organisation, personnel, evaluation experts

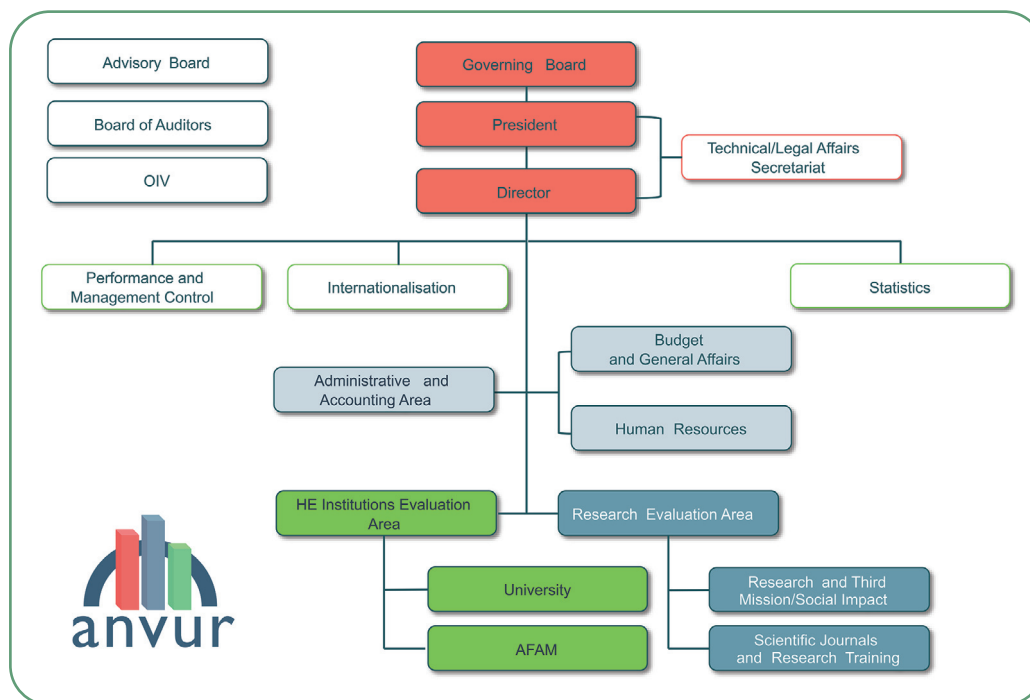


Figure 5 ANVUR Organizational chart

The **Governing Board** serves as the political body of ANVUR, responsible for establishing the Agency's activities, operational guidelines, evaluation criteria and methods. It is the decision-making body for all the evaluation procedures conducted by ANVUR, although the final accreditation decision is officialised only after issuing of the corresponding ministerial decree by Ministry of University and Research. The Governing Board comprises a maximum of seven members, selected from highly qualified and experienced personalities, including foreigners, in the field of higher education, research, and evaluation, coming from a variety of professional and disciplinary backgrounds. The composition of the Board ensures gender balance, with a minimum representation of two men and two women. The selection process for Board members is designed to uphold the independence and authority of ANVUR and its representatives. The President of the Italian Republic appoints the Governing Board members based on the proposal of the Minister of University and Research, which is subject to scrutiny by the relevant parliamentary commissions. The Minister selects the proposed members of the Governing Board from a list of ten to fifteen individuals, generated through a public call process overseen by an international committee that includes representatives from the OECD Secretary General, the National Lincei Academy, the European Research Council, the National Council of University Students, and the Ministry of University and Research. Serving on the Governing Board is a full-time commitment. Board members are placed on unpaid leave for the entire duration of their appointment and are prohibited from establishing any working relationship with the institutions being evaluated. Recently, the non-renewable mandate of Board members has been extended from four to six years (**Decree Law no. 36/2022**). The current composition of the **Governing Board** consists of five members, including the President, representing the major scientific areas of Italian academia.

The **President** serves as the legal representative of the Agency and oversees the strategic coordination of the Agency's activities. He/she is elected from within the Governing Board and presides over the Board's meetings.

The Director General is appointed by the Governing Board and holds a renewable mandate for a minimum of 3, maximum of 5 years. The appointment is made based on a proposal from the President, selecting from the candidates who responded to a public call. The Director General is responsible for managing and organising the internal operations of the Agency. He/she also has the task of executing the resolutions adopted by the Governing Board.

**Governing Board**

**Director**



In addition to the Directorate-General, the Agency, is structured into three areas, each led by a managerial-level officer:

1. Higher education institutions evaluation area. It is responsible for assessing the quality and performance of universities, Research institutes, and AFAM institutions. The officer heading this area oversees the evaluation processes and ensures their adherence to quality standards
2. Research evaluation area. This area is dedicated to evaluating research outputs and third mission activities of universities and research institutes. It is also responsible for the QA of PhD programmes and for producing classifications of journals and productivity indicators for the National Scientific Qualification. The officer in charge of this area manages the evaluation procedures and ensures the integrity and effectiveness of the evaluation process
3. Administrative and accounting area. This area handles the administrative and financial aspects of the Agency. It is responsible for managing the Agency's budget, financial resources, and overall administrative operations. The officer leading this area oversees the administrative and accounting functions, ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines

Each area, including the Directorate General, is subdivided into operational units, which have recently undergone a restructuring process to better meet the organisational requirements. In 2020, by the **Decree-Law no. 1/2020**, the staffing of the agency was increased from 35 to 45 permanent positions, plus the Director. However, currently, only 38 positions are filled; due to various reasons, 8 staff units are temporarily employed outside the Agency, in other public administrations. Furthermore, **Law Decree no. 44/2023** allocated an additional 15 units to ANVUR to accommodate the increased workload of the agency. These personnel will be recruited in the following months with the objective of filling all 60 staff positions by mid-2024.

To ensure the proper execution of its institutional activities in alignment with its values and principles, and with the objectives set by the Governing Board, ANVUR receives support by the following bodies/committees:

1. An **Advisory Board**, comprising a maximum of twenty renowned experts, both national and international, including professors, researchers, students, general directors, managers, representatives of prestigious academies and funding bodies, experts in economic, social and labour affairs, and members of civil society. The composition of the Advisory Board is determined by **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, and a legislative amendment would be required to include representatives from the AFAM sector. The members are appointed by the Governing Board for a period of four years, based on recommendations from national and international stakeholders. The Advisory Board convenes regularly (in presence or remotely) to offer opinions and suggestions to the Governing Board concerning the Agency's strategies, planned activities, evaluation criteria, methods, and procedural documents
2. A **Board of Auditors**, responsible for overseeing the administrative and accounting activities of the agency. This board consists of three members who serve a four-year term. Two of these members are appointed by the Minister of University and Research, while the third one is appointed by the Minister of Economy and Finance. The Board of Auditors ensures the proper management of financial resources and compliance with accounting procedures within ANVUR
3. An Independent Performance Assessment Body (**OIV**), which operates as a single-member entity, selected from a national list established by the Department of Civil Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. He/she serves a three-year term and is responsible for strategically monitoring and controlling the administrative performance, transparency and integrity of internal controls of the Agency. The OIV prepares an annual report that includes proposals and recommendations based on his/her assessments
4. An independent complaint committee (**Guarantee Committee**) consisting of five external members. The Guarantee Committee includes one member appointed by the State Attorney, who acts as the President, and four members appointed by the Advisory Board, representing the interests of university and AFAM students and professors. The Guarantee Committee is responsible for addressing and investigating complaints lodged against ANVUR's evaluation procedures, ensuring a fair and impartial process
5. An Equal Opportunities Committee (**CUG**), that comprises four members, including representatives from trade unions as well as officers from the Agency itself. The main

responsibility of the CUG is to promote the principles of equal opportunities and foster the creation of a positive and inclusive work environment. The committee works towards ensuring fairness, non-discrimination, and equal treatment for all employees within ANVUR

6. A **Board of Guarantors of the Code of Ethics**, composed of two members from the Governing Board and an external legal expert with extensive qualifications (who serves as the chairperson). The primary role of the Board of Guarantors is to interpret the Code of Ethics, ensure its application and take appropriate measures if any violations or discrepancies are identified

In addition to its permanent staff, ANVUR receives support from national and international experts for its evaluation activities. These experts collaborate with the agency's bodies and officers in conducting evaluation procedures. They may contribute to defining evaluation criteria, preparing guidelines, and drafting thematic reports or surveys. These experts commit to operating in accordance with the Agency's **Code of Ethics** and the general and specific measures outlined in its **Three-Year Plan for the Prevention of Corruption and Transparency**. Their involvement ensures a diverse and knowledgeable perspective in the evaluation processes while maintaining a commitment to ethical standards and transparency.

#### Supporting evidence

- Article 14, Paragraph 14-bis of **Decree Law no. 36/2022** (converted with modifications by **Law no. 79/2022**) extended the non-renewable mandate of Board members from four to six years.
- **Law Decree no. 44/2023** allocates additional staff units to the Agency, to address to its increasing workload.
- ANVUR **Code of Ethics** serves as the framework for ethical decision-making, guiding the moral standards and responsibilities of ANVUR's Staff and experts. It is based on the principles set forth in art. 2, 1 of **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**.
- ANVUR Equal Opportunities Committee (CUG) regulation is available at this [link](#).
- The **Three-year Plan for Prevention of Corruption and Transparency** maps agency processes with the purpose of enhancing ethical standards and preventing corruption.

### 4.3 Activities of the Agency within the scope of the ESG

According to the tripartite Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed upon with ENQA and EQAR, the following activities of the Agency fall within the scope of the ESG and are subject to external review:

1. Initial accreditation of new universities and their proposed study programmes
2. Initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies
3. Initial accreditation of new university study programmes (including those offered in decentralised branches)
4. Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes
5. Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes)
6. Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes
7. Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes
8. Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes
9. Periodic assessment of AFAM institutions and their study programmes (private institutions; pilot procedure for public institutions)
10. Coordination of the University Evaluation Boards (as a transversal activity)
11. Coordination of the AFAM Evaluation Boards

#### 4.3.1 Universities

In Italy, QA for universities is highly regulated, ensuring that the overall outcomes are ideally comparable and suitable for national analysis. This provides valuable insights not only for the institutions themselves, but also for legislators and decision-makers, including the allocation of funds. Accreditation of new programmes of all three cycles, as well as institutional accreditation is

obligatory for all public and private universities. As mentioned above (see [par. 3.1](#)), the quality of institutions and their educational offerings is evaluated and monitored through a combined institutional-oriented and program-oriented QA approach, known as the AVA system, aimed at achieving three primary objectives:

1. Assurance by the Ministry, through ANVUR evaluation activities, that Italian HEIs consistently provide a service of adequate quality to stakeholders, above all students and society as a whole
2. Promotion of responsible and reliable autonomy for HEIs in the use of public resources and in collective and individual behaviour related to teaching, research, and third mission activities
3. Improvement of the quality of teaching, research, and third mission activities within universities.

ANVUR employs a methodology that combines document analysis and on-site visits, tailored to the specific activity and institution/programme being evaluated. Evaluation activities heavily rely on peer review, with panels of experts selected from a public Register and appointed by ANVUR's Governing Board

Regarding the university system, ANVUR is responsible for the following ESG-type activities:

1. Initial accreditation of new universities and their proposed study programmes
2. Initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies
3. Initial accreditation of new study programmes
4. Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes
5. Periodic assessment and accreditation of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes)

As mentioned above, accreditation is in fact granted or denied by the Ministry in accordance with the output of ANVUR's assessment procedures. If the Governing Board expresses a negative opinion, the Ministry is required to comply or may request a review of the judgment only once.

#### **Initial accreditation of new universities and their study programmes**

**Legislative Decree no. 19/2012** stipulates that the Ministry, based on ANVUR's evaluation, grants approval or denies the establishment of new universities by assessing a set of quality requirements. The Ministry periodically allows the creation of new universities within its three-year programming.

**Ministerial Decree no. 989/2019** authorised the submission of new applications for the period 2019-2021 (allowance was not granted during the 2016-2018 and 2021-2023 periods). Following a newly defined procedure, eight of the candidate proposals submitted through a dedicated platform were transmitted to ANVUR after the preliminary eligibility review conducted by the Ministry. In 2020-2021, these proposals were evaluated by panels of ANVUR evaluation experts (CEV – Commissione di Esperti della Valutazione), including student experts. The evaluation aimed to verify compliance with several conditions, among which the presence of an ongoing multi-year research activity, the absence of study programmes already well represented at the national level, the availability of a well-structured QA system and the financial, logistical, and scientific sustainability of the project.

All eight proposals received a negative assessment from the ANVUR Governing Board. As a result, no new university was accredited by the Ministry. Additionally, two other applications were transmitted to ANVUR and negatively assessed in 2022, following an appeal procedure.

#### **Initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies**

Schools of Advanced Studies (SAS) are highly qualified higher education and research institutions, primarily offering PhD and post-PhD programmes (some of them also offer complementary advanced courses for students enrolled in bachelor's and master's degree programmes). The accreditation process for SAS was initiated in 2019, following the requirements outlined in **Ministerial Decree no. 439/2013**. ANVUR *Guidelines* (2018) established a procedure that involves desk analysis followed by an on-site visit.

The evaluation is conducted in English, utilising a customised protocol, by a panel of highly qualified international experts, which includes PhD student experts. These experts are selected from a specially established Register. The evaluation encompasses various aspects, such as the SAS governance, the implementation of the strategic plan, the planning of the training programmes,



the attractiveness of the school, the availability of residential facilities for all the students, the quality of its faculty and administrative staff, and the state of its financial and structural resources.

Accreditation is granted by the Ministry following ANVUR's proposal.

The periodic assessment of the seven accredited Schools of Advanced Studies is scheduled to be initiated in 2024. This assessment will be conducted based on specific requirements that will be defined through the revision of [Ministerial Decree no. 439/2013](#), initiated in the autumn of 2023 with the contribution of ANVUR. Following the revision of the decree, new ANVUR *Guidelines* will be drafted to provide guidance for the assessment process.

### **Initial accreditation of new university study programmes**

As per [Legislative Decree no. 19/2012](#) and subsequent ministerial decrees, the initial accreditation of new study programmes (including those offered in decentralised branches) is granted or denied by the Ministry based on the assessment carried out by ANVUR.

The evaluation takes place annually, typically from the end of January to mid-June, for new programmes that commence in the autumn of the same year. It is conducted by groups of ANVUR experts (PEV – Panel di Esperti della Valutazione), including system, disciplinary, telematic (for distance programmes), and student experts, primarily through desk analysis, following recently updated protocols (2021).

For medical and healthcare programmes, additional requirements are verified, and a mandatory site visit is conducted. When it comes to programmes offered in newly established decentralised branches of already accredited institutions, whether in Italy or abroad, ANVUR assesses the financial, structural, and scientific adequacy of both the parent institution and its branch; in this case a site visit is also mandatory. Additionally, ANVUR may be called upon to re-evaluate existing study programmes in the event of significant changes.

Experts assess a pre-defined set of requirements, that pertain to various aspects of the programme, including:

1. The overall quality of the project and the process through which it was defined (including the involvement of stakeholders)
2. The clear articulation of the reasons behind establishing the programme and a well-defined definition of the cultural and professional profiles of the graduates it aims to produce
3. A student-centred teaching approach and methodologies that prioritize the needs and engagement of students
4. The adequacy of the teaching and administrative staff (in terms of qualifications and expertise) to provide a high-quality educational experience. If the faculty does not meet the minimum required quantitative and qualitative standards for the teaching staff, there must be a plan in place to achieve those standards within a specific timeframe
5. The presence of suitable facilities and infrastructures to effectively support the programme's objectives

Programmes are assessed independently by each member of the experts' panel (excluding the president). The president is responsible for preparing an assessment report that summarises the evaluations provided by his/her colleagues. Based on this report, ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision regarding accreditation and communicates its proposal to MUR. If the decision is positive, MUR issues the official decree of approval for the study programme.

The information concerning the accredited programmes is made publicly available by the universities through the Annual study programme form (SUA-CdS), available on the university websites, which can also be reached through the University portal. The SUA-CdS contains details on the educational objectives and paths, learning outcomes, roles and responsibilities related to the management of the study programmes, QA provisions, conditions for the periodic review of the study offer, and implemented improvements.

In 2023, a total of 238 new study programmes were evaluated for activation in academic year 2023/2024. These included 100 bachelor's programmes, 99 master's programmes and 10 single-cycle programmes. The evaluation process involved the participation of about 130 experts.

In the following table, the number of evaluated study programmes is reported:

A.Y.	Approved in the first instance	Approved following counterarguments / review procedure	Not approved	Total
2019/2020	102	26	8	<b>136</b>
2020/2021	149	45	2	<b>196</b>
2021/2022	144	40	2	<b>186</b>
2022/2023	170	30	9	<b>209</b>
2023/2024	159	40	11	<b>210*</b>

\* Data updated as of August 2023; seven ongoing evaluations will be closed by the end of October.

Table 2 Number of study programmes approved/not approved during the last five years

### Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes

Since 2013, ANVUR has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the initial accreditation and annual verification of university PhD programmes. As for all other procedures, the formal accreditation is subsequently granted by the Ministry, in full compliance with ANVUR's evaluation. Recent Ministerial Decrees, namely **no. 226/2021** (Regulation) and **no. 301/2022** (Guidelines), have introduced relevant innovations, in order to establish a comprehensive QA system that ensures the effective design and management of doctoral training in full compliance with the ESG. The main requirements for accreditation include:

1. The overall quality of the proposal. The PhD training project and the research profile of the participating institutions must be closely aligned with the teaching and research activities outlined in the PhD programme
2. The scientific qualification of the PhD Board. The Board members (a minimum of twelve, including at least half of full and associate professors) should be esteemed researchers in their respective fields
3. The presence of adequate funding and research facilities. Each PhD programme should have a minimum number of available scholarships to support students, as well as access to well-equipped laboratories, libraries, databases, and calculation tools to facilitate research activities
4. The university proposing the PhD programme must have an ESG-compliant QA system for doctoral training, to promote quality and excellence in the doctoral training process

If all these requirements are met, the programme is granted accreditation by the Ministry, based on ANVUR's proposal, for a period of five years, with annual follow-up being conducted to check the persistence of compliance to the requirements (unless significant changes necessitate a new accreditation process). Evaluations are currently made sur-dossier by ANVUR staff; a summary of the results, including any recommendations, is published on the Agency's website. As stipulated by Ministerial Decree no. 226/2021, starting from the 40th PhD cycle, ANVUR will begin to engage external experts for individual accreditation requests, particularly for national doctoral programmes.

In the most recent round of the procedure (2023/2024, 39th cycle), ANVUR assessed a total of 1,219 PhD programmes. This included 94 new proposals, 19 renewals following the expiration of the initial five-year period, and 1,106 annual confirmations. All these programmes received positive evaluations, either initially or after addressing requested amendments (see [par. 5.1](#)).

The internal QA system of the university proposing the PhD programme is evaluated as part of the periodic assessment, conducted in accordance with the AVA 3 procedure described above.

In the following table, the number of evaluated PhD programmes is reported; all of them were approved, either in the first instance or as a result of a process that involved the correction or improvement of the original proposal:

A.Y.	Approved in the first instance	Approved following counterarguments / review procedure	Not approved	Total
2019/2020	927	66	0	<b>993</b>
2020/2021	987	38	0	<b>1025</b>
2021/2022	1025	30	0	<b>1055</b>
2022/2023	1008	144	0	<b>1152</b>
2023/2024	1023	196	0	<b>1219</b>

*Table 3 Initial accreditation of PhD programmes. Number of new PhD programmes approved/not approved during the last five years*

### **Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes)**

Universities are accredited for a maximum duration of five years, while the accreditation of their study programmes has a duration of three years. Accreditation is confirmed by the Ministry in compliance with ANVUR's proposal, following an assessment procedure that must take place at least once every five years. A panel of ANVUR experts (CEV – Commissione di Esperti della Valutazione), including system, disciplinary, telematic (for distance programmes), and student experts verifies a set of QA requirements for the institution and a sample of its departments and programmes, including PhD programmes (the university is informed of the choice at least five months before the start of the evaluation procedure). Programme evaluation is thus integrated in institutional-level evaluation, with the aim of promoting the autonomy and responsibility of the institutions and helping them to take ownership of their strategic choices, performance, and improvement.

The CEV consists of 7 to 30 experts, depending on the number of sample programmes and departments included in the assessment. These experts are selected from ANVUR's official and publicly available expert Registers. Each team is structured with a president responsible for drafting the final report, a coordinator ensuring consistency and evidence-based assessments, system experts, discipline experts, student experts, financial sustainability experts, e-learning experts (for online institutions and/or programmes), and a visit contact person appointed by ANVUR, who facilitates all communications between the Agency and the HEI and handles logistics during the evaluation process. The assessment takes place through the on-desk analysis of a self-assessment report prepared by the university (including a list of documentary sources), followed by an on-site visit.

For the second round of assessments (AVA 3), which started in 2023, both the requirements and the procedure have undergone substantial revisions, in accordance with the principles outlined in **Ministerial Decree no. 1154/2021**, following ANVUR's proposal. Main revisions include the evaluation of PhD programmes, the complementary use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, and the publication of the experts' full reports.

The assessment aims to verify the persistence of the quality requirements that make the university suitable for its institutional functions and activities and its internal approach to monitoring and continuous enhancement. ANVUR's evaluation protocol addresses the following areas, articulated in requirements and points of attention with reference to the institution (for the evaluation of the strategy and the modalities of planning, management and QA), the study programmes and the departments (for the coordination of training, research and third mission activities). The periodic assessment of PhD programmes encompasses the evaluation of the

programme's design, the planning and organisation of teaching and research activities for doctoral candidates, and the methods employed for monitoring and improving these activities, also based on the collection of **PhD students' opinions**.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Strategy, planning and organisation</i>	Universities are evaluated based on their ability to have a clear and public vision of the quality of teaching, research, and other activities. They need to put in place an appropriate QA system aimed at ensuring that their policies, strategies, and objectives are implemented effectively, with clear ways to review how well things are working. This involves getting input from different parts of the university and considering both self-assessment and external evaluations. Students and other stakeholders should have an active role in decision-making processes.
<i>Resource management</i>	Universities are assessed on how well they manage their resources (both physical and non-physical) to support their plans and strategies. They need to have in place a good system for planning, hiring, training, and developing their staff. Universities should also document long-term financial sustainability through an effective financial system. Moreover, they must demonstrate that they have a suitable system for planning and managing their facilities, equipment, technologies, data, information, and knowledge for teaching, research, and other activities they offer.
<i>Quality assurance</i>	QA processes are evaluated, specifically the university's ability to create a self-assessment system for study programmes and departments. This includes monitoring and reviewing teaching, research, and third mission activities. The QA system should involve all relevant bodies and functions at different levels and consider feedback from the University Evaluation Board.
<i>Quality of teaching and student services</i>	The university's capacity for clear programme planning and course offerings is evaluated. Key aspects include designing study programmes to meet societal and international needs, incorporating internationalisation goals and different teaching methods (in-person, online, or blended). Additionally, the evaluation considers how well the study programmes align with available teaching and research resources, facilities, and infrastructure. The university's focus on students is also assessed, including effective orientation, transparent admission processes, career support, and mentoring. Lastly, the evaluation includes an assessment of the management system for resources and student support services.
<i>Quality of research and third mission/societal impact</i>	The university's capacity to envision how departments define their strategic lines, especially in research and social impact/third mission, is evaluated. This includes assessing how well departments align their strategies with the university's overall plan. The evaluation also looks at whether departments have effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation systems for their processes, outcomes, and improvements. Additionally, the assessment examines the disclosure of resource utilisation criteria at the department level, in line with their strategic plan and university guidelines. The management system for resources and services supporting research and the third mission is also analysed.

The specific “points of attention” and “aspects to be considered” for each area are provided in detail at this [link](#), together with guidelines and other supporting documents. To support the assessment, a combination of **qualitative and quantitative result indicators is utilised**. The assessment proposal is graduated in four-levels, instead of the five-level scale adopted in the previous cycle: “Fully satisfactory”, “Satisfactory”; “Partially satisfactory”; “Not satisfactory” (this negative judgement leads to a proposal of non-accreditation) (see also [par. 6.5](#)). The ultimate objective is to evaluate the independent capability of individual universities and their study programmes to effectively plan, implement, monitor, and enhance their internal QA processes, as well as to continually improve the organisation and quality of their teaching and research activities. In the first AVA cycle, all assessed universities were accredited, with ratings distributed as in the following table (no university received the rating E – Unsatisfactory, which would have led to the closure of the university):

Year	A – Very positive	B – Fully satisfactory	C – Satisfactory	D – Conditional accreditation	E – Unsatisfactory	Total
2014			1			<b>1</b>
2015		5	4	5		<b>14</b>
2016		6	2	3		<b>11</b>
2017		2	10	1		<b>13</b>
2018	3	5	6	1		<b>15</b>
2019	2	10	6	1		<b>19</b>
2020		2	5			<b>7</b>
2021	2	3	5	1		<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>91</b>

*Table 4 Universities assessed and ratings in AVA first cycle*

The CEV prepares a preliminary assessment report within two months after the visit, which is then sent to the university along with ANVUR's evaluation of a set of qualitative and quantitative result indicators. The university has the right to present its factual observations and counterarguments. Taking these exchanges into consideration, the CEV has one month to produce and send the final review report to ANVUR. The ANVUR AVA Unit produces a summary of the main findings, commendations and recommendations. Based on these documents (and the original documentation), the Governing board deliberates on accreditation and communicates its decision to MUR, which grants or denies accreditation to the university and its programmes through a ministerial decree. The expert reports (which include the university's self-assessment and the comments made on the first draft) are then made publicly available, along with ANVUR's decision, including the summary of commendations and recommendations.

### **The role of the University Evaluation Boards**

According to [Law no. 240/2010](#), The University Evaluation Boards (Nuclei di Valutazione – NdV) are the evaluation bodies responsible for checking continuously the quality of education and research within each university and for ascertaining the overall quality of its internal processes, thus contributing to the improvement of the internal self-evaluation system. Additionally, for public universities they also took on the role of Independent Performance Assessment Bodies ([OIV](#)).

The University Evaluation Board act as a bridge between the university and ANVUR; [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#) assigns to ANVUR the role to steer and coordinate their activities.

The University Evaluation Boards comprise both internal and (mostly) external members (minimum 5, maximum 9 in total), including at least two QA experts, and typically also a student representation. They produce, in full autonomy, an annual report on the implementation of the university's strategic plan and the achievement of its programme objectives. The report is sent to both to the Ministry and ANVUR, and it is used as supporting evidence in the Agency's EQA activities.

ANVUR constantly monitors the composition of the University Evaluation Boards and publishes statistics on their main characteristics. The Coordination of the Boards (CONVUI) is one of the stakeholders of the Agency and is consistently engaged in discussions and consultations. On the University Evaluation Boards' activities see also [par. 6.1](#).

#### Supporting evidence

- [Legislative Decree no. 19/2012](#) introduces the AVA system.
- [Ministerial Decree no. 989/2019](#) outlines the universities' three years planning for 2019-2021, allowing the establishment of new universities.
- [Ministerial Decree no. 439/2013](#) establishes the accreditation process of SAS.
- [Ministerial Decree no. 1154/2021](#) defines the requirements, procedures and principles of the new Model of Periodic Accreditation of University and their study programmes, called AVA 3.
- Ministerial Decrees [no. 226/2021](#) (Regulations) and [no. 301/2022](#) respectively introduce new Regulations and Guidelines regarding the quality assurance system of doctoral training.
- [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#) and [Law no. 240/2010](#) respectively define the role of ANVUR in relation to the University Evaluation Boards (established by [Law no. 370/1999](#)) and identify their competencies.
- University Evaluation Boards publish their report on their institutional website (see e.g. [this link](#)).
- Further documentation on University procedures can be found in Annexes groups 1 and 3.

### 4.3.2 AFAM institutions

The reform [Law no. 508/1999](#) mandates the creation of a comprehensive QA regulation to be implemented across the entire AFAM system. Formally, ANVUR's involvement in the QA of the AFAM sector, as stated in the [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#), is contingent on the release of these regulation by the Ministry, which has not occurred yet. Nevertheless, ANVUR's role in the QA of private AFAM institutions has expanded over the years, and more recently, it has also extended to public AFAM institutions. In the past five years, ANVUR has therefore taken significant strides towards developing a comprehensive QA framework for the initial accreditation and periodic assessment of both private and public AFAM institutions and programmes. These efforts are conducted in strict adherence to the ESG, to ensure compliance and QA within the AFAM sector, despite the lack of a regulatory framework.

ANVUR is currently responsible for the following activities:

1. For private institutions
  - The initial accreditation of new institutions and their proposed first-cycle diploma programmes
  - The initial accreditation of new first-cycle diploma programmes
  - The periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
2. For all AFAM institutions
  - The initial accreditation of new second-cycle diploma programmes
  - The initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes
  - A pilot procedure for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions, launched in 2023, aiming at reaching full compliance with the ESG
  - The coordination of AFAM Evaluation Boards (as a transversal activity)

As a rule, in AFAM procedures ANVUR is in charge of evaluating:

1. Overall quality requirements concerning the academic governance functions and activities
2. Quality requirements specific for the typology of the artistic programmes and for the level of education concerned, such as the artistic quality of the faculty (teaching, learning and research qualification) and the adequacy of scientific and technical equipment for the specific programmes
3. The financial sustainability of the institutions and their study programmes



### Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions

**Presidential Decree no. 212/2005** assigned the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU, now ANVUR) with the responsibility of assessing new private AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes. Based on this assessment, the Ministry would decide whether to grant or deny authorisation for the issuance of legally valid first-cycle academic degrees. In the academic year 2021/2022, **Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021** (an update to **Ministerial Note no. 8093/2016**) provided further details on the procedures and criteria for accrediting and periodically assessing new private institutions and their proposed study programmes. On the relevance of **note no. 1071/2021** for the improvement of QA procedures of AFAM institutions see also **par. 4.3.2**.

To apply for initial accreditation, candidate institutions submit their requests to the Ministry through a dedicated IT platform. They are required to provide a technical report that covers the institution as a whole and its proposed study programmes, including their Teaching regulations. The requests may only concern study programmes that have already completed a minimum three-year cycle of activity.

Accreditation is granted by the Ministry:

1. Following positive evaluation of the teaching Regulations by the National Council for Higher Education in Art and Music (CNAM) for each of the requested programmes, and
2. Following ANVUR's positive assessment regarding: 1) the quality of spaces, equipment and student facilities, 2) the qualitative and quantitative adequacy of the faculty in terms of teaching and research, and 3) the financial sustainability of the institution

The Governing Board's decision is based on the on-desk evaluation of the documents submitted by the candidate institution by a panel of peer-review experts (known as the CEV – AFAM), which includes experts in QA systems, discipline experts, a financial sustainability expert, and student experts. These experts are selected from ANVUR's Registers of AFAM experts. If deemed necessary, an on-site visit may also be arranged. Specific requirements for distinct types of AFAM institutions are outlined in the ANVUR *Guidelines*.

Since the entry into force of the operational guidelines for the accreditation of new private AFAM institutions (**Ministerial Note no. 8093 of 2016**) and until 2021/2022, ANVUR has evaluated 91 applications, of which 8 concluded with a positive assessment.

A.Y.	Number of applications	Positive assessment	% of positive assessments on total applications
2017/2018	18	3	12,50%
2018/2019	14	0	0%
2019/2020	24	2	8,30%
2020/2021	26	1	3,60%
2021/2022	9	2	12,50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7,50%</b>

Table 5 Accreditation of new private AFAM institutions

### Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes

**Presidential Decree no. 212/2005**, stipulates that ANVUR is involved in the initial accreditation of first-cycle diploma programmes offered by already accredited private AFAM institutions. Furthermore, **Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018** expanded ANVUR's mandate to include second-cycle diploma programmes offered by all public and private AFAM institutions.

Requests for new programmes are submitted annually through a dedicated IT platform; new programmes can only be proposed by institutions that have already undergone their first periodic assessment (see below). After the teaching regulation has undergone positive scrutiny by CNAM, eligible proposals are then evaluated by panels of ANVUR experts, including students, who are selected from the Register of AFAM experts. The evaluation process examines the availability of

spaces, equipment, and student facilities, the quality of teaching staff, and the financial sustainability of the proposal. These requirements, whose specific contents vary based on the type and level of the AFAM programme being proposed, are detailed in ANVUR [Guidelines](#). Additionally, the annual report of the AFAM Evaluation Board is taken into consideration during the evaluation process.

Programme accreditation is granted or denied by the Ministry based on ANVUR's proposal.

According to [Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021](#), the same criteria used for accrediting new private institutions also apply to already authorised institutions that request the establishment of first-cycle academic study programmes in a new decentralised location. This ensures consistency in the evaluation process.

A.Y.	1st-cycle diploma programme			2nd-cycle diploma programme		
	Approved	Not approved	Total	Approved	Not approved	Total
2021/2022	16	3	19	104	17	121
2022/2023	9	0	9	82	17	99
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>220</b>

*Table 6 Initial accreditation of AFAM study programmes: evaluated applications*

#### **Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their study programmes**

[Ministerial Decree no. 1214/2021](#) stipulates that if one or more new study programmes are proposed for activation in a decentralised branch of a public AFAM institution, the new location must be initially authorised by the Ministry. This authorisation is based on the positive evaluation of the Teaching regulations by CNAM, as well as the evaluation by ANVUR regarding the spaces, facilities, and financial sustainability of the institution as a whole. The evaluation process is supported by AFAM panels of experts (CEV – AFAM). The first request has arrived in 2023 and the evaluation is currently in progress.

#### **Periodic assessment of AFAM institutions and their study programmes**

As outlined in [Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021](#), private AFAM institutions and their programmes undergo periodic assessment by ANVUR, at the end of the second and fifth year of the institution's activity and every five years thereafter. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that the initial accreditation requirements are still met and maintained over time. In specific cases, such as a change in ownership or corporate structure, or if critical issues are identified in the annual report of the Evaluation Board, the assessment may be conducted earlier than scheduled. This allows for timely evaluation and addressing of any significant changes or concerns. The Ministry can request an early assessment in such situations to ensure the ongoing QA of the institution and its programmes. In the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, a total of 43 private AFAM institutions were assessed; among these, 26 received a positive assessment, 12 a conditional assessment, and 5 obtained a negative one.

The evaluation by the ANVUR expert panel (CEV AFAM) takes into account several factors. These include the information provided by the institution on the periodic assessment platform, the contents of the annual report from the AFAM Evaluation Board, and the results of an on-site visit if deemed necessary. The assessment can result in either a fully positive evaluation or a conditional evaluation if there are critical issues that need to be addressed by the institution. If an institution fails to meet one or more requirements outlined in the [Presidential Decree no. 212/2005](#), the accreditation may be revoked. The final decision on revocation is made by the Ministry based on ANVUR's proposal. In the event of accreditation revocation, enrolled students are allowed to complete their studies and obtain the corresponding qualification. This ensures that students are not negatively affected by the accreditation decision.

With the goal of establishing a comprehensive QA framework for the entire AFAM system, ANVUR has recently initiated a pilot project for the periodic accreditation of public AFAM institutions and their study programmes, aligned with the existing AVA system for universities. This pilot project, launched at the beginning of 2023, aims to test a set of standards that have been developed with the collaboration of an international working group, that included representatives from organisations such as EQ-Arts, MusiQuE, and ESU. The standards were designed to ensure full compliance with the



quality requirements outlined in the ESG. Following the pilot project, the set of standards underwent a wide stakeholder consultation process to gather feedback and ensure their effectiveness.

The assessment process, carried out by a panel of AFAM experts, involves several steps. It begins with the institution preparing a self-assessment report, followed by an on-desk evaluation where the panel analyses relevant documents. Subsequently, an on-site visit takes place to gather further information. Once the assessment is completed, the panel prepares a final report. Institutions have the opportunity to provide their comments on the conditions and recommendations outlined in the report before its final delivery. A selection of the institutions that voluntarily applied to participate in the experimental assessment conducted by ANVUR was chosen based on their typology and geographical representation. As of now, three pilot visits are expected to conclude by December 2023, with seven more scheduled for 2024-2025.

After the conclusion of the experimentation phase, a new consultation will be launched to finalize a consolidated version of the standards and accompanying *Guidelines*. This updated version will consider the results of the pilot visits and incorporate the feedback received from the evaluated institutions, experts involved, and other stakeholders. The revised standards will then be integrated into the upcoming Regulation for the QA of the AFAM system, which is currently being developed by the Ministry.

The experimental evaluation protocol encompasses the following nine standards, segmented into requirements and points of attention:

Requirement	Description
<i>QA Policy</i>	The institution has a QA policy that is part of its management strategy and is made public. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, also involving external stakeholders.
<i>Design and approval of programmes</i>	The institution designs and approves its study programmes through appropriate processes. The programmes are designed to achieve established objectives, including expected learning outcomes. The title conferred upon programme completion must be specified and clearly communicated, referencing the corresponding level in the Italian Framework of Higher Education Qualifications and, consequently, the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework.
<i>On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</i>	The institution systematically monitors and periodically reviews study programmes to ensure they achieve established objectives and meet the needs of students and society. Any planned or undertaken actions resulting from the review are communicated to all stakeholders.
<i>Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</i>	The institution ensures that study programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, and the assessment of learning outcomes reflects this approach.
<i>Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</i>	The institution uniformly applies predefined and publicly available regulations for all stages of the student's "lifecycle," including admission, academic progression, recognition, and certification.
<i>Teaching staff</i>	The institution verifies the competence of its teaching staff and adopts fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and professional development of faculty.
<i>Learning resources and student support</i>	The institution adequately funds teaching and learning activities and ensures sufficient availability of teaching resources and student support.
<i>Information management</i>	The institution ensures the collection, analysis, and use of relevant information for effective management of study programmes and other educational activities.
<i>Academic integrity, transparency and public information</i>	The institution adheres to high ethical standards in managing its activities and provides clear, accurate, objective, and easily accessible information about its activities, including study programmes.

### **The role of the AFAM Evaluation Boards**

The AFAM Evaluation Boards were established by **Presidential Decree no. 132/2013**, which also outlines their responsibilities. Recently, **Law no. 234/2021** specified their composition, mandating the presence of 3 members with diversified competences, including 2 external individuals who may be either Italian or foreign. The Boards serve as the main entities responsible for the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) activities in AFAM institutions. They assess the outcomes of the institution's teaching and research activities and monitor the use of resources. Each year, they generate an annual report, following a model and a set of **Guidelines** established by ANVUR, which is submitted to both the Ministry and the Agency. This report encompasses an analysis of students' feedback, which the Boards are entrusted with collecting.

In analogy with the role played for the University Evaluation Boards, ANVUR also performs a coordination and guidance role for the activities of the AFAM Evaluation Boards. To this end, in 2021, a "Network of the AFAM Evaluation Boards" was established by ANVUR. The Network convenes typically three times a year to discuss topics related to their activities, share the analysis of the annual reports conducted by ANVUR, and exchange suggestions and best practices (on AFAM Evaluation Boards see also **par. 6.1**).

To ensure the qualification of the AFAM Evaluation Boards and align their activities with the principles defined in the ESG, ANVUR published in 2022 a document containing **Criteria and Guidelines for Selecting the Members of the Evaluation Boards**. A specific Register for AFAM IQA Experts was also created (see **par. 6.4**), that institutions can freely access to identify qualified members for their Boards.

In the last five years, ANVUR has dedicated significant efforts to establish and implement a comprehensive and consistent QA framework within the AFAM system. Drawing from the knowledge and expertise gained from the university sector, ANVUR has specifically focused on addressing the unique aspects of artistic and musical institutions, considering their diverse dimensions and characteristics and using the knowledge gained from the evaluation of Italian universities and European best practices. In particular, during this period, ANVUR:

1. Has actively promoted a shared quality culture by engaging in continuous dialogue and collaboration with all stakeholders within the AFAM system. This has included direct involvement of the various actors in the definition of standards and evaluation methods, ensuring their perspectives and expertise are incorporated into the QA framework. Emphasis has been placed on the crucial role of the AFAM Evaluation Boards, as outlined in **Presidential Decree no. 132/2013**, in promoting institutions' commitment to quality in teaching, research, student services, administrative organisation, and transparency. The Boards are responsible for preparing an annual report that is carefully examined by ANVUR; to support their work, specific **Guidelines** for the selection of Board members were published in 2022. Furthermore, the establishment of the "Network of AFAM Evaluation Boards" has facilitated interaction, fostering dialogue, the sharing of best practices, and collaborative work
2. Has been actively working towards aligning the QA procedures of universities and AFAM institutions, while acknowledging the unique characteristics of each of the two sectors. A notable achievement in this regard is the ongoing effort to establish a framework for AFAM doctoral programmes. The drafting of a Regulation for AFAM doctorates involved collaboration between the Ministry, ANVUR, and various stakeholders within the AFAM community. The proposal is based on the recently updated Regulation for university doctorates, ensuring full compliance with the ESG. This harmonisation effort aims to promote consistency and coherence in the QA practices across both sectors
3. Has sought to learn from the best international models and practices in the QA of artistic higher education, research and production. In pursuit of this goal, an International Working Group on Evaluation and Quality Assurance in AFAM institutions was established in 2020. The working group consisted of ANVUR evaluation experts, QA experts from the international agencies EQ-Arts and MusiQuE, and representatives from the European Students' Union (ESU). The primary objective of the working group was to ensure that AFAM QA procedures fully align with the ESG. The working group provided valuable proposals and recommendations to ANVUR's Governing Board, which were instrumental in the preparation of updated **Guidelines** for the self-evaluation activities of AFAM institutions and the **annual reports** of the AFAM Evaluation Boards

ANVUR believes that the initiatives and efforts undertaken in the past five years have laid a solid foundation for the implementation of the Regulation on the QA of AFAM institutions. These endeavours have fostered a culture of quality and continuous improvement within the AFAM sector. ANVUR is confident that the forthcoming Regulation will be effectively implemented in this context, further promoting the enhancement and advancement of quality in AFAM institutions.

#### Supporting evidence

- **Law no. 508/1999** defines the organization of the field of higher artistic education in three cycles and establishes the introduction of a Regulation on the evaluation of AFAM institutions, aimed at defining a QA system.
- **Presidential Decree no. 212/2005** (article 11), stipulates that CNVSU (later ANVUR) is involved in the initial accreditation of first-level diploma programmes offered by private AFAM institutions. Furthermore, **Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018**, Article 8 expanded ANVUR's mandate to include second-level diploma programmes offered by all public and private AFAM institutions. In the academic year 2021/2022, **Ministerial note no. 1071/2021** (updating the **Ministerial note no. 8093/2016**) provided further details on the procedures and criteria for accrediting new private institutions and their proposed study programmes.
- **Presidential Decree no. 132/2013** establishes AFAM Evaluation Boards and outlines their duties; **Law no. 234/2021** defines their composition.
- **Ministerial Decree no. 1214/2021** stipulates that if one or more new study programmes are proposed for activation in a decentralized branch of a public AFAM institution, the new location must receive initial authorization from the Ministry.
- The publication of the **Criteria and Guidelines for Selecting the Members of the AFAM Evaluation Boards** and the creation of an AFAM QA Expert profile are aimed at enhancing the quality of the AFAM Evaluation Boards, and the alignment of their work with the ESG.
- AFAM Evaluation Boards publish their reports on their institutional website (see e.g. [this link](#)).
- Further information on AFAM procedures can be found in Annexes groups 02 and 04.
- For the topics and programmes of the meetings of the AFAM Evaluation Board Network see Annexe 05a.

### 4.3.3 Other activities not directly comprised in the ESG

ANVUR also carries out a wide range of activities that extend beyond the scope of the ESG. These activities are governed by specific legislation and regulations:

1. **Evaluation of Research Quality.** The Evaluation of Research Quality (VQR) is a comprehensive exercise conducted by ANVUR every five years. Its purpose is to evaluate the research and societal impact outcomes of public and private universities, research institutes, and private institutions that voluntarily participate. The assessment is carried out through a peer review process, where groups of experts evaluate research products such as articles, books, and other contributions. Bibliometric indicators may also be used when appropriate. In addition, the evaluation includes the assessment of selected projects related to third mission activities. The VQR exercises provide an updated evaluation of research quality in various scientific fields. The objective is to promote the improvement of research quality in the assessed institutions and allocate performance-based funding to the Italian University system. The first VQR exercise covered the period between 2004 and 2010, followed by subsequent rounds for the years 2011-2014 and 2015-2019. The most recent evaluation involved the assessment of over 180,000 research products by a panel of over 650 selected experts and 11,000 external national and international reviewers. Additionally, 676 case studies related to third mission activities were evaluated by a mixed panel composed of experts from academia, professions, and civil society. The VQR 2020-2024, currently in preparation, will include the evaluation of research projects and infrastructures. A working group has recently been established by the Ministry to work on the development of a research evaluation procedure carried out in AFAM institutions
2. **National Scientific Qualification.** The National Scientific Qualification (ASN – Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale) is an essential preliminary requirement for applying to permanent positions of full and associate professor in Italian universities. ANVUR is responsible for evaluating full professors who apply to become members of the national committees tasked with examining candidates for both positions. ANVUR also proposes a set of indicators to the Ministry, which are used to establish the minimum qualitative and quantitative standards of scientific production that candidates must meet in order to participate in the qualification procedure

Evaluation  
of research  
quality  
(VQR)

Other  
non-ESG  
related  
activities

3. **Classification of scientific journals in humanities and social sciences.** To calculate the indicators for the National Scientific Qualification, ANVUR classifies scientific and "A-class" journals in the humanities and social sciences. This classification is carried out with the assistance of a panel of external scientific experts who are selected through a public call. Journals are evaluated based on specific procedural and content-related requirements to determine their inclusion in the listings. This classification process helps ensure the quality and relevance of the journals considered for the National Scientific Qualification, providing a basis for assessing the research output and impact of candidates in the humanities and social sciences fields
4. **Development and administration of tests on students' disciplinary and transversal skills.** The TECO (TEst of COmpetence) project is an experimental project focused on the development of indicators related to students' disciplinary and transversal learning outcomes. It is designed to be integrated into the self-assessment processes of the universities that voluntarily take part into the project, aiming to assess the skills of their students from different disciplines and study programmes. TECO-T (transversal) assesses essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and civics; TECO-D (disciplinary) evaluates the specific knowledge and competencies related to the content areas of each study programme
5. **Setting of standards of administrative performance for HEIs and research institutes.** Since 2013, ANVUR has been entrusted with the responsibility of evaluating the performance of the technical and administrative activities of public universities and research institutes. An integrated approach has been developed that links performance assessment to the three primary missions of HEIs: scientific research, teaching (for universities), and societal impact through third mission activities

In addition to these non ESG-related activities, ANVUR conducts research on QA matters and actively participates in discussions on evaluation methodologies at both national and international levels. Key areas of interest include research assessment reform, the promotion of open science, the identification of predatory publications, the analysis of the impact of the VQR on publication practices and scientific performance of Italian universities, the use of bibliometric indicators in evaluation processes, and the exploration of the third mission's role and its interaction with research activities.

Upon request from the Ministry, ANVUR also undertakes other additional tasks, including the development of indicators, the conduction of ex-ante or ex-post assessments of externally funded PhD or researcher positions, the review of the three-year programming projects submitted by universities, and the evaluation of funded research projects.

#### 4.3.4 Agency's international activities

**Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** designates ANVUR with the responsibility of collaborating with international scientific bodies and agencies involved in QA. Over the past five years, ANVUR has expanded its international engagement, particularly after becoming a member of ENQA in 2019. Recognising the significance of internationalisation, the Governing Board has made it a strategic priority and established a dedicated project unit, that will be transformed in a fully operational unit in 2024.

ANVUR actively engages in European and international networks focused on QA in higher education and research. It participates in various events and working groups organised by ENQA, such as those on micro-credentials and the QA of research and is also involved in the Thematic Peer Group C of the BFUG, which addresses topics such as micro-credentials and the QA of European Alliances. Additionally, ANVUR contributes to an informal G7 Working Group dedicated to promoting exchanges on research evaluation practices among participating countries.

In 2022, ANVUR became one of the founding signatories of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). A member of ANVUR's Governing Board holds a position on the Coalition's Steering Board, highlighting the agency's leadership role in applying the principles of the agreement and reflecting on research evaluation methodologies. On the same topic, ANVUR also actively participates to the activities of the AGORRA project (A Global Observatory of Responsible Research Assessment), coordinated by the Research on Research Institute (RoRI).

Since 2020, ANVUR has actively expanded its cooperation networks through the establishment of agreements with various European and international QA agencies. These include AVEPRO (Holy See), ACPUA (Aragona Community), HCERES (France, agreement renewed in 2022), AKOKVO/ACQAHE (Montenegro), ASCAL (Albania), Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d (Regional Government of Madrid), ANECA (Spain), ANQA (Armenia), MAB (Hungary), SUNEDU (Peru), and CONEAU (Argentina). Two members of ANVUR's Governing Board have been invited to join the Boards of AVEPRO and HCERES, respectively, further enhancing collaboration and mutual engagement. Additionally, one member of the Governing Board is part of the Steering Board of the Hungarian Agency MAB. ANVUR is also a founding member of the European Research Infrastructure Evaluation Consortium (ERIEC), along with HCERES (France), AEI (Spain), and EVALAG (Germany). These collaborations strengthen ANVUR's position in the international QA community and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices among participating agencies.

Furthermore, ANVUR staff and Governing Board members engage actively in leading international conferences on higher education and research evaluation, such as the annual Science and Technology Indicators (STI) conference. They also play a pivotal role in organizing or contributing to global conferences and workshops focused on crucial aspects of the ongoing QA discourse, such as research and societal impact evaluation, QA practices within European Universities, the influence of open science on research assessment, the utilization of quantitative metrics and their synergy with peer review, and the evolving publication trends within the social sciences and humanities (SSH). Furthermore, ANVUR is an active member of three CoARA Working Groups (concerning respectively the practices in the assessment of research proposals, the reforming of career assessment and the issues related to multilingualism and language biases in research assessment) and is also member of the project "Strengthening CoARA and Enabling Systemic Reform of Research Assessment – A Booster", which has recently been selected for financing by the European Commission. Moreover, ANVUR has established international working groups focusing on QA in the AFAM sector and the external assessment of the VQR procedure.

The Agency also engages in staff mobility initiatives, both incoming and outgoing, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange with colleagues from Albania, Montenegro, Hungary, Armenia, as well as other international partners. Representatives from these agencies visited ANVUR, while ANVUR and Ministry representatives had the opportunity to be hosted by organisations such as NVAO, the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders and the Romanian agency ARACIS. These activities are facilitated through initiatives like the Erasmus+ IMINQA project, strengthening ANVUR's international networks and facilitating the sharing of expertise and experiences in QA practices.

During the past three years, ANVUR has actively pursued participation in international funding opportunities. For the 2023-2025 period, the Agency is engaged in the ERASMUS project "REMOTE: Assessing and evaluating remote learning practices in STEM", developed in partnership with other agencies and universities from Spain, Portugal, and Italy; it will also participate in the above mentioned "CoARA Boost" project, which focuses on advancing the principles promoted by the Coalition. Additionally, ANVUR acts as an associate partner in three out of six Erasmus+ funded consortia working on the implementation and testing of a "European label" for joint degrees.

In 2023 ANVUR also underwent the accreditation procedure with the **World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)**, with the purpose to continue ensuring that medical graduates from Italy can pursue further education in medical specialty schools in the United States. Additionally, this accreditation aims at enhancing the international reputation and attractiveness of Italian medical schools.

Further information on the international activities carried out by ANVUR are available at the recently implemented section of the [Agency's website](#).

#### Supporting evidence

- **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** formally establishes the Italian National Agency for the evaluation of universities and research institutes and sets out its international vocation (see in particular art. 2).



## 5. Profile, functioning and EQA activities of the Agency

### 5.1 ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

*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.*

It is recommended that ANVUR's Management Team explore ways enabling the increased strategic involvement of the Advisory Board. (EQAR also noted that ANVUR should provide a clear description and presentation of its activities on its website, separating activities that fall within and outside the scope of the ESG or within or outside its remit).

It is also recommended that the Agency plan a more systematic formal dialogue with specific stakeholders (students, professional organisations, social partners) to collect feedback that is actually of benefit to the agency's governance and work.

In line with the best international assessment practices, ANVUR oversees the national public system for evaluating the quality of universities and research institutions. To achieve this objective, ANVUR carries out various evaluations of institutions and programmes, employing appropriate methodologies that are transparently developed with the active involvement of stakeholders. The results of these evaluations are communicated to the evaluated entities in a timely manner, and relevant documents are made openly available on the Agency's website.

In its documentation related to QA activities, such as criteria and standards, guidelines, templates, and deliberations of the Governing Board, ANVUR consciously increased the explicit references to the ESG, Part 2. This demonstrates the Agency's commitment to aligning its practices with the principles and guidelines outlined in the ESG, which serve as a reference framework for QA in European higher education. ANVUR is also actively involved in evaluating research quality, supporting and monitoring the IQA activities of the evaluated institutions, and setting standards for their administrative performance.

The Governing Board (see [par. 4.2](#)) is responsible for defining the strategic directions of the Agency. These directions are outlined in the publicly accessible [Triennial Activity Plan](#), (see [par. 5.6](#)) which undergoes annual verification and updates. The plan is submitted to the Ministry for feedback and approval, in accordance with Presidential Decree no. 76/2010. .

To achieve its objectives, ANVUR engages with various stakeholders, including universities, research institutes, peer-review experts, representatives from the world of culture, society, and professions, students, the Ministry, and other governmental bodies, as well as European and international players in the field of QA, higher education, and research policy development (see [par. 7](#)). Qualified representatives from these stakeholder groups are also included in the Agency's Advisory Board. Following a recommendation from the previous ENQA panel, ANVUR has increased its dialogue with the Advisory Board, allowing its members to actively contribute to ANVUR's activities and further development, providing feedback on general areas of interest to the Agency, strategic documents, or newly implemented procedures; a preliminary draft of the Triennial Activity Plan is also shared with the Agency's Advisory Board before finalization to include their input and contributions in defining strategic objectives. More generally, the involvement of external stakeholders and their participation in decision-making processes is encouraged; in particular, the Agency engages students in all its evaluation processes and values their input in shaping and improving the higher education landscape.

Activities are planned in advance, in line with corresponding legislative provisions: strategic perspectives are outlined in the Triennial Activity Plan, and they are translated into specific actions and objectives in the Performance Plan (see [par. 5.6](#)). Constant dialogue with the Ministry allows the Agency to represent its needs in the definition of evaluation timetables and procedures, ensuring the quality of its activities.

Table 7 presents the number of EQA activities carried out in the period 2019-2023 (for details see the procedure at [par. 4.3](#)):

	Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Initial accreditation new universities		0	0	8	2	0
Initial accreditation SAS		2	4	1*	0	0
Initial accreditation new study programmes		136	196	186	209	238
Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes		993	1025	1055	1152	1219
Periodic accreditation universities and study programmes		19	7	11	1**	3
Initial accreditation new private AFAM institutions		26	33	19	18	12
Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes		80	116	136	126	123
Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions		/	/	/	/	/
Periodic accreditation of private AFAM institutions		10	10	13	13	14
Periodic accreditation of public AFAM institutions (pilot procedure)		/	/	/	/	3

\* This refers to the evaluation of the SSM (*Scuola Superiore Meridionale*), which was not intended to grant accreditation but rather, under MUR request, to evaluate SSM's capacity to enter in the SAS system after a three-year experimental period.

\*\* Follow-up Visit to IUL University (Florence)

Table 7 Number of EQA activities carried out in 2019-2023

Looking ahead, ANVUR acknowledges the importance of further strengthening its engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, including the Ministry, to contribute to the enhancement of the legislative framework (in specific fields such as the QA of the AFAM sector or the accreditation of joint programmes). ANVUR is aware that this proactive approach will improve the Agency's overall effectiveness. Continuous interaction with the Ministry will also help to address the potential challenges arising from additional and unexpected tasks requested by the Ministry, which could disrupt the regular workflow and limit the time available for strategic reflection on ANVUR's future directions.

#### Supporting evidence

- ANVUR's [Triennial Activity Plan](#) outlines and illustrates the Agency's strategic guidelines and objectives for the year 2023 and the following years 2024 and 2025.
- ANVUR activities, within and outside the scope of the ESG, are presented at this [link](#).

## 5.2 ESG Standard 3.2 Official status

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

ANVUR was officially established by [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#), which implemented [Decree Law no. 262/2006](#). The Agency, that began its operations in 2011, functions as an independent public body with a broad evaluation mandate concerning the evaluation of the Italian higher education and research system, also including the institutions' third mission activities. Since its inception, ANVUR has been entrusted with the following responsibilities: conducting external evaluations to assess the quality of activities carried out by universities and public and private research institutions receiving public funding. ANVUR also coordinates and supervises the evaluation activities assigned to the University Evaluation Boards. Furthermore, it evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of public funding programmes and grants allocated to research and innovation activities. These tasks are defined in [Decree Law no. 262/2006](#) and in the [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#).

Since the adoption of the **Decree Law no. 69/2013**, the scope of the Agency's responsibilities has expanded to include the evaluation of technical-administrative activities of universities and research institutes. Additionally, ANVUR has been entrusted with the task of defining indicators related to research, such as those used for the National Scientific Qualification to the role of university professor (ASN) or the ranking of excellent departments.

Furthermore, ANVUR's role in the initial and periodic accreditation of AFAM institutions and study programmes, which **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** connected to the future implementation of a regulation on the evaluation of AFAM institutions, has been gradually expanding. Initially focused on private institutions, ANVUR's accreditation responsibilities have gradually expanded to include both private and public sectors.

#### Supporting evidence

- **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** (article 2) formally establishes the Italian National Agency for the evaluation of universities and research institutes, implementing the provision of **Decree Law no. 262/2006** (articles 2, paragraphs 138 and 139).

## 5.3 ESG Standard 3.3 Independence

*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.*

*It is recommended that ANVUR strive for greater autonomy in setting timetables and defining procedures more freely (particularly AFAM accreditations) for improving the quality and validity of external quality activities.*

#### a. Organisational independence

**Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, clearly establishes the Agency's full organisational, administrative, and financial autonomy from third parties, including HEIs, government bodies, and stakeholders' organisations. This autonomy ensures that the Agency can carry out its work independently and without external influence. The organisational autonomy of the Agency was formally emphasised on the occasion of the establishment of the Ministry of University and Research (MUR), which was separated from the Ministry of Education. **Decree Law no. 1/2020**, converted into **Law no. 12/2020**, assigns to the MUR the responsibility of maintaining relations with ANVUR instead of the supervisory role mentioned in **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**.

The members of the Governing Board are appointed for a single non-renewable term of six (previously four) years. The **appointment procedure** (see **par. 4.2**) is designed to select individuals who can contribute to the independent functioning of the Agency. Board members are engaged full-time and are prohibited from establishing any working or collaboration relationships with the institutions being assessed during their mandate.

In addition, the Director of the Agency is appointed by the Governing Board based on the proposal of the President. The appointment process involves a public call, ensuring transparency and the possibility to evaluate candidates from different professional backgrounds.

Members of the Agency's governing bodies are bound by duties and obligations outlined in the ANVUR's **Organizational and Functional Regulation**, last updated in February 2022. They are also required to comply with the standards set in the Agency's **Code of Ethics**.

#### b. Operational independence

ANVUR ensures a transparent and rigorous selection process for its staff members through public calls. The profiles of the officers to be recruited are clearly described, and evaluation committees consisting of external experts and ANVUR managers are involved in the selection process.



When it comes to drafting or revising evaluation standards and methodologies, ANVUR systematically consults all relevant stakeholders. However, the responsibility for writing these documents ultimately lies with the Governing Board, with assistance from ANVUR staff.

External evaluation procedures primarily rely on peer review, conducted by experts appointed by ANVUR. These experts are chosen independently by the Governing Board from public Registers of experts (see [par. 6.4](#)). The criteria for selecting experts and including them in the Registers of university and AFAM experts are described in publicly available [Procedural Guidelines for the Composition of the Registers of AFAM and University Evaluation Experts](#), providing transparency and clarity regarding the expert selection process.

### *c. Independence of formal outcomes*

The outcomes of evaluation procedures involving external experts are documented in official reports, prepared by the experts themselves. ANVUR ensures that the reports accurately reflect the evaluation process and its findings (see [par. 6.6](#)). The experts are responsible for presenting their assessments and conclusions based on the established methodology, evaluation standards, and the specific objectives of the evaluation.

ANVUR's [Code of Ethics](#) sets the ethical framework within which the experts must operate. It outlines the principles that guide their conduct during the evaluation process, emphasising the importance of independence, impartiality, transparency, rigor, professionalism, and confidentiality. These principles aim to uphold the integrity and credibility of the evaluation outcomes. The *Code of Ethics*, that underlines the independent role and unconstrained decision-making of the Agency, also applies to the Governing Board, the Director, and all staff members. The [Three-Year Plan for Prevention of Corruption and Transparency](#) also contributes to the improvement of the Agency's independence from corruption risks.

The Governing Board is charged of formulating an accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal to the Ministry in complete autonomy. ANVUR's decisions are then transmitted to the Ministry, which is responsible for granting or denying accreditation. In the initial and periodic accreditation of universities and their study programmes (including PhDs) the final Ministry's decision must be compliant with ANVUR's proposal. The Ministry may only once ask the Agency to revise its judgement for a specific reason: in this case, a new assessment is carried out, which may involve a different expert panel (see [par. 6.7](#)). In AFAM evaluation procedures, current legislation does not require the Ministry to conform its decisions to ANVUR's proposals, but in fact this has always happened until now.

In response to one of the recommendations from the ENQA panel, which highlighted the importance of granting ANVUR greater autonomy in setting timetables and defining procedures, particularly regarding AFAM accreditations, a targeted dialogue was initiated between the Agency and the Ministry. The objective was to enhance the external accreditation procedures for AFAM Institutions and establish clear roles for ANVUR and the Ministry. As a result of this dialogue, modifications were made to the schedule of AFAM accreditation activities starting from 2022, to ensure that ANVUR has sufficient time to conduct thorough external evaluations. For University procedures as well, an effort was made to optimize activity planning: a significant example is the schedule for the new cycle of periodic assessment, which has already been defined in advance for the next five years and published on the [website](#).

ANVUR is aware of the need to safeguard its independence, even in the future prospect of opening up to cross-border QA activities that will require collaboration with foreign agencies.

## Independence of outcomes

### Supporting evidence

- The [Procedural Guideline for the Composition of the Registers of AFAM and University Evaluation Experts](#) provides the criteria for selecting experts to be included in AFAM Registers.
- ANVUR [Code of Ethics](#) serves as the framework for ethical decision-making, guiding the moral standards and responsibilities of ANVUR's Staff and experts. It is based on the principles set forth in art. 2, 1 of [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#).
- The [Three-year Plan for Prevention of Corruption and Transparency](#) maps agency processes in order to improve ethical standards.

## 5.4 ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis

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

*It is recommended that ANVUR systematically publishes any outcomes resulting from single working groups' activities performed by the Agency.*

In carrying out its evaluation activities, ANVUR relies on a substantial amount of data and information provided by the assessed institutions, obtained from the Ministry's databases, or independently generated as part of the agency's EQA procedures. Additional insights are derived from thematic working groups appointed to address QA-related topics and from specific research projects conducted by ANVUR's officers and members of the Governing Board. These data are presented and analysed in various publicly available reports, documents, and scientific contributions:

1. The **Biennial Report on the State of the Italian Higher Education and Research System. Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, stipulates that ANVUR is required to produce every two years a Report on the state of the higher education and research system, which is then delivered to the Minister of University and Research, who shares it with the Council of Ministers and Parliament. This comprehensive Report, coordinated by the Director with the support of the Governing Board, is a demanding task. The majority of the Agency's staff contribute by discussing data and writing chapters. The purpose of the Report is to provide an updated overview of key data related to higher education (including universities and the AFAM system), research, and the third mission. Changes compared to the previous edition of the Report are analysed and reflections on the most significant trends are proposed. Due to the pandemic, the latest edition of the Report, presented in June 2023, was delayed, given the need to describe and analyse the impact of the pandemic on the higher education and research system. The Report, which falls under the full responsibility of ANVUR, serves as the main systemic and reliable statistical and analytical source of information in Italy regarding higher education and research. It has been recognised as good practice in the previous ENQA external evaluation report. The most recent edition of the Report also offers thematic insights on various current topics. These include the impact of the pandemic on student enrolment, medical higher education, the third mission, disability, internationalisation of the Italian higher education system, online universities, gender analysis, and the measurement of students' competences. These thematic insights will be presented and discussed individually with relevant stakeholders between the end of 2023 and the first half of 2024, offering valuable perspectives and analysis on these specific issues; they will also provide policymakers with data and reflections for correcting, improving or implementing actions and measures for the country's development
2. Thematic analysis produced by working groups appointed by ANVUR on specific topics. Topics are chosen based on the input received from stakeholders and the most debated themes in the national and international academic and QA community. A recent example is the **Report on Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Disorders in Italian Universities**, delivered in 2022 as the result of a research work started in 2019 with the appointment of a dedicated **working group**. The group resumed its activity in 2023, extending consideration to AFAM institutions as well as to teaching and administrative staff. Another international **working group** was set up in 2021 on the **Recognition and enhancement of the teaching competences of university professors**. In 2023 it delivered a context analysis and a guidelines document focused on the qualification and enhancement of professors' teaching skills, aiming at providing a comprehensive understanding of the current context surrounding teaching practices in higher education and offer suggestions for improving lecturers' pedagogical competencies. At the end of 2020 ANVUR also launched a **survey on the distance learning services provided by universities** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the scope to analyse the teaching experiences of Italian universities during this challenging period
3. The annual reports of the University and AFAM Evaluation Boards serve as a valuable source of information on the internal functioning of institutions and their quality monitoring and assurance systems. This is particularly crucial for the AFAM sector, as its internal QA system is still in the process of consolidation and regulatory development

Biennial  
report on  
HE and  
research

Other  
thematic  
analysis

4. **VQR reports.** After each evaluation of research exercise (VQR), a comprehensive final analysis of the results is conducted, that provides a detailed overview of the outcomes and findings of the evaluation process. Following the final analysis, an internal self-assessment document is prepared, aiming at further exploring and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation procedure itself and at identifying areas for improvement in the future VQR round. In addition to the internal self-assessment, an external assessment is conducted by an international expert group appointed by ANVUR, comprising distinguished scientists, QA experts, and representatives from reputable international funding bodies. The external assessment brings an external perspective and expertise to the evaluation process, ensuring an objective and rigorous evaluation of the VQR procedure. Both the **internal** and **external analysis** are published on ANVUR website
5. Contribution to the annual CNEL (National Council for Economy and Labour) and ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) reports, for the sections concerning the higher education system
6. Participation in scientific events and publication of papers and monographs. ANVUR's officers, predominantly PhD holders with research experience, and members of the Governing Board take part in national and international conferences, workshops, and presentations, organised internally or externally (see **par. 4.3.4**), on topics related to the evaluation activities of the Agency and they also produce scientific contributions on issues related to the QA and evaluation debate (of which a list is available **here**). A recently adopted regulation specifies the criteria that ANVUR follows for funding publications produced by the agency's officers on topics related to its core activities

The **ANVUR Triennial Activity Plan** (updated annually), and the annual activity report are both publicly available on the agency's website, published as annex to the **Annual Financial Reports**. These documents provide opportunities to reflect on the activities carried out in various areas of competence and aim for continuous improvement.

The production of thematic analysis is formally recognised as part of ANVUR's institutional commitment, as mentioned in **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, and ANVUR's **Organizational and Functional Regulation**. ANVUR already conducts thematic analysis in various areas of its activities, but there is a scope for further implementation and systematisation of this practice. This would provide useful insights for improving and updating current procedures: for example, it would be particularly important to analyse periodic accreditation procedures at the end of each cycle, also with the contribution of the institutions and experts involved.

#### Supporting evidence

- The **Biennial Report on the State of the Italian Higher Education and Research system** is the main source of information in Italy on HE and research (see Annex 07a for the English version of the introduction to the report).
- **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, Article 4, Paragraph 3 stipulates that ANVUR is required to produce every two years a Report on the state of the higher education and research system, which is then delivered to the Minister of University and Research.
- Thematic analyses:
  - The **Report on Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) in Italian Universities** fills the gap in knowledge about students with disabilities in Italian universities (see Annex 07b for the English version of the introduction to the report).
  - The Report of the **Recognition and Enhancement of the Teaching Competences of University Professors** working group formulates guidelines for recognizing and enhancing teaching competencies (see Annex 07c for the English version of the introduction to the report).
  - The WG on the **Assessment and Quality Assurance of the Higher Education Institutions in the Arts, Music and Dance sectors (AFAM)** provided a relevant contribution to the alignment of the AFAM QA system to the ESG, by giving valuable suggestions on the structure of the annual report of the AFAM Evaluation Boards and developing an initial draft of the standards for the periodic assessment of AFAM public institutions.
- The **VQR 2015-2019 Report** provides an overview of the evaluation of research activities of Italian institutions and departments. Critical Analysis of VQR 2015-2019 Results, edited by ANVUR, is available at this **link**. VQR 2015-2019 external review, edited by external experts is available at this **link**.
- ANVUR's **Triennial Activity Plan** and annual reports allow for reflection and continuous improvement in various areas of expertise.

## 5.5 ESG Standard 3.5 Resources

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

*It is recommended that ANVUR establish priorities with regard to the development of meaningful processes and procedures, compatible with available resources. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Agency reflect on possible changes to Agency's organisational structure, including an evaluation – in a medium to long term perspective – about the extent to which reserving a relatively large percentage of the budget to the full-time engagement of governing board members would still be considered an optimal use of resources. It is recommended that the Agency enhances IT resources for using software applications and providing support to the Agency's activities.*

### Financial resources

#### a. Financial resources

According to [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#), ANVUR's resources are granted by law as a specific item in the annual State budget allocated to the Ministry of University and Research. Any modifications must be approved by Parliament. Additional resources may be allocated by the Ministry for specific projects or evaluation activities carried out by ANVUR; minor funding may also come from participating in international projects. The ANVUR budget for the period 2019-2022 amounted to an average annual revenue of approximately 8.8 million euros and an average annual cost of around 8.4 million euros, with higher expenses in 2021 due to the evaluation of the research exercise ([VQR 2015-2019](#)) covered by a specific ministerial budget allocation of the years 2019 and 2020. The Agency's budget structure and allocation details can be found in [ANVUR's provisional and final balance reports](#).

#### Revenues

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
State funding	7.690.568,00 €	87,87%	7.766.881,00 €	75,19%	7.694.197,00 €	98,67%	7.694.197,00 €	94,86%
Ministerial funding	1.000.000,00 €	11,43%	2.500.000,00 €	24,20%	0,00 €	0%	320.932,07 €	3,96%
Other revenues	61.179,69 €	0,70%	63.000,00 €	0,61%	103.954,07 €	1,33%	95.999,79 €	1,18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.751.747,69 €</b>		<b>10.329.881,00 €</b>		<b>7.798.151,07 €</b>		<b>8.111.128,86 €</b>	

#### Costs

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
Operating costs – Governing Board	1.277.271,98 €	19,84%	1.103.387,63 €	15,08%	1.033.184,66 €	9,06%	1.046.576,52 €	13,06%
Operating costs – permanent staff	2.126.973,52 €	31,38%	2.212.582,36 €	30,25%	2.303.935,54 €	20,19%	2.434.020,13 €	30,38%
External experts and not permanent staff	1.557.865,44 €	22,98%	1.465.991,19 €	20,04%	5.100.154,70 €	44,70%	1.954.295,54 €	24,39%
Acquisition of goods and services	1.402.541,73 €	20,69%	2.109.969,75 €	28,84%	1.494.812,94 €	13,10%	1.861.938,81 €	23,24%
Other expenses	319.949,99 €	4,72%	392.027,51 €	5,36%	714.581,66 €	6,26%	450.557,60 €	5,62%
Acquisition of durable goods	94.138,83 €	1,39%	31.268,60 €	0,43%	762.776,34 €	6,63%	265.605,49 €	3,31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.778.741,49 €</b>		<b>7.315.227,04 €</b>		<b>11.409.445,84 €</b>		<b>8.012.994,09 €</b>	

Table 8 Allocations of the Agency's budget (2019-2022)

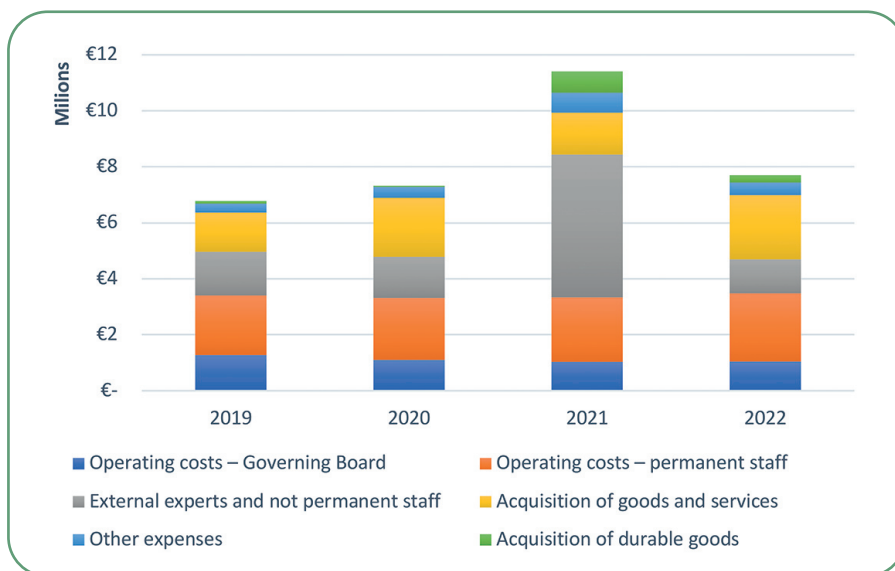


Figure 6 Allocations of the Agency's budget (2019-2022)

The budget allocated for the year 2023 amounts at €8.140.343, which aligns with the overall trend. The forecast budget for 2023 includes two specific items: "Computer and IT services" and "Services for systems and related maintenance", whose estimated cost amounts to approximately €1.046.000.

#### b. Human resources

As already mentioned (par. 5.2), **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**, establishes ANVUR's organisational structure, which comprises three areas (evaluation of higher education institutions, evaluation of research, and economic and financial management) whose functions and operational procedures are defined by the **Organizational and Functional Regulation**. The Director is responsible for the entire structure, while each area is headed by a manager appointed by the Governing Board for a renewable five-year term. Each area is further divided into operational units, with each unit being coordinated by an officer.

Since the previous external evaluation of ENQA, significant developments have occurred in the overall organisational framework of the Agency. These changes have been implemented to enhance the Agency's capacity to carry out its institutional activities with greater efficiency. Towards the close of 2020, an internal audit process was initiated, resulting in the approval of specific modifications to the organisational structure of the units. In particular, the number and structure of operational units have been redefined, and workloads have been redistributed more equitably among the various units. An internationalization project unit has also been created, set to become a standalone operational unit in 2024. These changes were endorsed by the Governing Board in February 2022. The execution of this reorganisation is anticipated to be fully functional by the conclusion of 2023, accompanied by an augmentation in the permanent staff count. Over this timeframe, two legislative measures have contributed to the expansion of the Agency's workforce. Through **Decree Law no. 76/2010**, the organic endowment experienced an enlargement from 35 to 45 units of permanent staff. Additionally, **Decree Law no. 44/2023** brought about an incremental rise of 15 further positions. Upon the finalisation of the recruitment process, the Agency's permanent staff will encompass 60 units. However, it is important to acknowledge that as of the Report's issuance, the tally of permanent staff stands at 39, out of which 5 are temporarily seconded to other administrations. The 11 vacant positions are set to be occupied during 2024, following the conclusion of ongoing or upcoming selection procedures.

Personnel recruitment procedures and salaries within ANVUR are determined by national legislation, which also establishes the specific regulations governing staff recruitment, including selection criteria and evaluation methods. While ANVUR has the authority to define the profile of the permanent staff to be recruited, it does not have the power to influence or control the hiring process itself. Similarly, the salary scale for ANVUR's permanent staff is determined by the relevant national laws and regulations governing public sector remuneration.

Notwithstanding the positive trend of the recent years, it should be noted that the Agency's staff remains rather small, also in comparison with that of other national agencies; maintaining the

## Human resources



highest possible quality of work in the numerous and increasingly onerous institutional tasks is therefore a challenging task. This is particularly true for strategic areas that have not fully realised their development potential, such as AFAM or international activities.

Professional profiles	Staff allocation by law (to be reached in the following years)	Ongoing recruitment	Staff hired as of 15.09.2023	Staff in service as of 15.09.2023				
			On duty	Outgoing external secondments	Total	Permanent staff	Fixed-term staff	Total
Managers	3		3	0	3	3	0	3
Administrative staff	16	6	7	1	8	8	0	8
Evaluator/Technical staff	35	10	18	6	24	23	1	24
Administrative assistant	6	1	5	0	5	5	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>

Table 9 Agency's human resources

ANVUR managers and evaluation/administrative staff members possess a robust educational background, spanning various disciplinary fields, and demonstrate high professional qualifications. A notable 90% of them hold a PhD degree, indicating their expertise and experience in academic and research domains. This educational foundation equips them with the necessary knowledge and competence to fulfil their roles within ANVUR effectively. To further enhance the competences of its staff, ANVUR has devised plans to offer personalised training courses in addition to general upskilling programmes, aimed at improving individual staff members' skills in areas such as teamwork, problem-solving, language proficiency, leadership, and other abilities relevant to their work. By tailoring training to specific needs and objectives, ANVUR seeks to foster the development and growth of its personnel, enabling them to excel in their respective roles. The provision of personalised training reflects ANVUR's commitment to continuous professional development and the recognition of the importance of equipping its staff with the necessary skills to navigate the diverse challenges and demands of their work. From 2021 onwards, ANVUR worked towards a better integration of its strategic documents; since 2022, they have been merged into an annual Integrated Activities and Organisation Plan (PIAO), in order to streamline and enhance the programming and organisation of work, facilitating the achievement of objectives. The PIAO also includes a Plan for Agile Working, which regulates remote working modes, promoting flexibility and ensuring effective results (see par. 5.6).

The activities of the Equal Opportunities Committee (CUG) focus on promoting organisational well-being, equal access, and professional development opportunities for all ANVUR employees irrespective of their gender, age, religion, belief, ethnic origin, disability, or sexual orientation. The CUG also plays a role in developing policies related to work-life balance and combating discrimination. The recent approval of Gender Equality and Positive Actions Plan represents a further step in this direction (see par. 5.6).

#### c. IT resources

To enhance procedural efficiency and address the challenges posed by a limited staff, ANVUR has taken steps to improve its IT resources in response to a recommendation received from the ENQA panel in 2018. Since late 2019 ANVUR has become a member of CINECA, a non-profit consortium of universities and public institutes specialised in developing advanced applications and services for universities and related public administrations. As part of this collaboration, ANVUR has equipped itself with a range of new IT tools. One notable example is the AVA+ platform, which was designed by ANVUR and implemented by CINECA between 2020 and 2021. This platform serves as a centralised system for managing procedures related to the initial and periodic accreditation of universities and study programmes. It is accessible to both expert panels and the assessed institutions and keeps track of the various phases of the procedures, enabling greater efficiency, transparency, and simplified monitoring by ANVUR. A similar tool is being developed for AFAM procedures. These technological advancements facilitate smoother

## IT resources



communication and interaction between ANVUR, expert panels, and the institutions being assessed, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and quality of the procedures undertaken by the Agency.

The migration of the Agency's database to the cloud was also carried out during 2020, resulting in an improvement in IT security and better management of data and resources. All the documentation related to accreditation procedures is stored online, along with the resolutions adopted by the Governing Board. Access to documents is allowed through an authentication and access control procedure, and the repository is protected by a backup and disaster recovery system. As regards data storage and security, the Agency follows the European regulations set by the GDPR and the guidelines of the National Cybersecurity Agency, as described in the detail in [ANVUR Digital Preservation Handbook](#).

The widespread implementation of "smart" or "agile working" during the pandemic prompted ANVUR to adopt various initiatives to enhance its IT hardware and software resources. These measures included acquiring new IT equipment (laptops, desktop computers, or other devices to enable seamless connectivity), implementing relevant applications, and providing digital training to staff members.

Following the previous panel's recommendation, the organisational structure of the Agency has been substantially redefined, in order to make process management more rational and efficient. Further planned improvement areas concern the following aspects:

1. The digitization of personnel recruitment through the acquisition of applications via the national platform for recruitment in the Public Administration (InPA)
2. The rationalization of expert evaluators' contract management by consolidating all tasks under a single operational unit and completing the digitization of the entire process (through the activation of a specific platform with restricted access for experts)
3. The optimization of administrative and operational tasks related to on-site visits, including travel management, with the provision of a specific assistant role to support the panel.

#### Supporting evidence

- ANVUR budget and internal organization is ruled by: [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#) (Article 12, Paragraph 7) ANVUR's resources are granted by law as a specific item in the annual State budget allocated to the Ministry of University and Research for the allocation of ANVUR budget; Article 12, paragraphs 1-3, establishes ANVUR's organisational structure; [Law n. 12/2020](#) for the increase of ANVUR permanent staff; [Law Decree 44 of 6 April 2023](#) for a further increase in ANVUR permanent staff.
- The [Integrated Activities and Organization Plan \(PIAO\)](#) is developed annually to optimize work processes and objectives, It incorporates a Plan for Agile Working, designed to foster the flexibility and effectiveness of remote work.
- ANVUR has enhanced its IT resources through the membership with [CINECA](#) and the implementation of new tools for its procedures (such as [AVA+](#)).
- The Agency's financial statements are published on its institutional [website](#).
- On personnel, see the institutional [website](#).

## 5.6 ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

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

It is recommended that ANVUR introduce a system aimed at formalising processes ensuring that external feedback is collected systematically and leads to continuous improvements within the Agency.

All evaluation activities performed by ANVUR are guided by the principles of autonomy, impartiality, professionalism, transparency, and publicity, as stated in the [Presidential Decree no. 76/2010](#) and in accordance with the ESG. These principles are further detailed in the [Code of Ethics](#), which applies to both the Governing Board and the agency's staff members and collaborators. Experts also sign a no-conflict-of-interest statement and commit to abstaining from personal benefits derived from their roles. The ethical quality of actions and decisions, along with adherence to high standards of professional competence and integrity, are fundamental values for ANVUR. These

values support the agency in fulfilling its role in serving the higher education and research system and society as a whole, while fostering trust from its stakeholders.

The internal QA of ANVUR's activities ensures that they are conducted in line with the Agency's values and goals and particularly that they are fit for purpose. Four sets of activities are particularly relevant in this regard: 1) strategic planning; 2) organisation and monitoring of the experts' activities; 3) feedback collection; 4) self-reflection on performed activities and collected feedback, leading to continuous improvement of the quality system.

The general organisation of ANVUR is outlined in the **Organizational and Functional Regulation**, which establishes the roles of key stakeholders. This Regulation defines the President's and the Governing Board's political steering role, the Director's responsibility for management coordination, and the operational tasks assigned to the various areas within the Agency's structure.

The quality of ANVUR's organisational processes and their outcomes are guaranteed through an internal system that encompasses strategic planning, monitoring and result verification. The Agency, in compliance with the guidelines of the National Anti-corruption Authority (ANAC), has carried out the mapping of organisational processes for the identification of potential corruption risks and their prevention through the adoption of appropriate measures, both general and specific. Additionally, the coherence between the measures aimed at preventing corruption and those enhancing process functionality, along with evaluating the performance of the Agency and its officials, is under constant monitoring by the Independent Evaluation Body (OIV). The OIV ensures that the contents of the **Three-Year Plan for the Prevention of Corruption and Transparency** align with the objectives outlined in the strategic-management programming documents. Moreover, it confirms that objectives related to corruption prevention and transparency are factored into performance measurement and evaluation. The OIV also validates the contents of the annual report submitted by the Responsible for Corruption Prevention and Transparency (RPCT), which encompasses the outcomes of conducted activities; he/she also assumes a pivotal role in formulating guidelines for the conduct of the Agency's personnel. Furthermore, transparency is a strategic objective of the Agency, which ensures the regular updating of the 'transparent administration' section, as defined by **Legislative Decree no. 33/2013**. Additionally, ANVUR makes available on its website **a comprehensive table outlining the diverse administrative procedures**, including references to pertinent offices, projected timelines for completion of the procedures, and the array of judicial safeguards at one's disposal.

The above-described system is supported by several key documents (all published on the Agency's website):

1. The Agency's **Triennial Activity Plan** (see **par. 3.1**), designed with a three-year outlook and undergoing annual updates. It serves as a comprehensive framework that outlines and describes ANVUR's strategic directions and objectives across its different areas of operation.
2. The triennial **Performance Plan**, also updated every year, in which ANVUR's strategic orientations are translated into specific objectives that encompass the Agency as a whole, its different areas, and individual staff members. The Director proposes these objectives to the Governing Board, following a participatory definition process that involves all agency staff. Each objective is then further broken down into concrete actions, accompanied by measurable indicators and target results. The performance cycle is monitored by the **OIV** (see **par. 4.2**), who also monitors both the compliance with the principles and duties of transparency and publicity, and the effectiveness of the internal control system in maintaining ANVUR's work quality. As an independent entity, the OIV provides an external perspective: this enhances credibility and trust among stakeholders, upholding quality standards and methodologies. Since 2022-2024, the *Performance Plan* has been incorporated, together with other programming documents, into the *Integrated Activity and Organisation Plan (PIAO)*. The primary objective of the PIAO is to promote a higher and improved level of engagement from the Agency's staff and stakeholders through an integrated approach. By doing so, the PIAO aims to contribute to the creation of public value, furthering ANVUR's mission in providing valuable services to society

3. ANVUR's **Three-Year Plan for the Prevention of Corruption and Transparency**, which is updated annually, includes a comprehensive mapping of all agency processes, assessing and quantifying the risk of corruption. Measures are then outlined to mitigate this risk and enhance ethical standards within the organisation, fostering transparency and integrity

Regular informal staff meetings are held within ANVUR's areas and units, initiated by unit heads, area managers, or the Director, where discussions on various issues and future developments take place. Additionally, ANVUR staff and Governing Board members actively participate in international QA events to benchmark the agency's IQA practices.

The quality, transparency, and integrity of ANVUR's evaluation activities are internally ensured through established procedures and guidelines. These are designed to guarantee the competence of the experts involved, their professionalism in applying ANVUR's evaluation procedures, the independence and impartiality of their assessments, and the suitability of the evaluation frameworks for their intended purposes. Additionally, the evaluation frameworks possess the necessary flexibility to adapt if required (as during the COVID-19 pandemic, [see 6.3](#)). In particular:

1. Experts who are included in the ANVUR **university** and **AFAM** expert Registers are selected through public calls, following a transparent selection process; the criteria for inclusion are defined and updated, if necessary, by the Governing Board. The list of eligible experts is published on the Agency's website, ensuring transparency and accessibility of information to the public
2. Experts undergo comprehensive training that covers various aspects related to their professional responsibilities. This training includes modules focused on their specific tasks, facilitating the exchange of good practices, and providing references to the ESG. Additionally, the training emphasizes the values defined in the **Code of Ethics**
3. Experts are assigned evaluation tasks based on criteria of competence, geographical provenance, gender balance, and job rotation. Expert panels are subject to checks by the institutions under periodic assessment to identify any conflicts of interest. Panel members must not have affiliations with the evaluated institutions or have taught in them or their branches in the preceding five years. Governing Board members abstain from decisions involving institutions they are affiliated with
4. Evaluation procedures and decision-making criteria undergo a careful process of formalisation, which includes the development of comprehensive *Guidelines* and supporting documents. These resources outline the specific requirements and expectations of the evaluation process, and are provided to both the experts and the evaluated institutions. The *Guidelines* explicitly reference the ESG, to ensure alignment with international quality standards. Presentations of new procedures to institutions and stakeholders are also regularly held by officers and Governing Board members. A recent example of formalisation is offered by the revised periodic assessment procedure (AVA 3) ([link](#))
5. The Governing Board plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality control of evaluations. It is responsible for defining and approving evaluation standards and methodologies. The Board reviews evaluation reports to ensure compliance with requirements and the inclusion of necessary evidence. Additionally, it verifies that consistent criteria are applied across different expert panels. The Governing Board holds the ultimate authority in making final decisions on institutional and programme accreditation procedures, based on the reports provided by the experts. The diverse scientific backgrounds and experiences of the Board members, as well as the collective decision-making process, contribute to upholding the quality of ANVUR's work
6. To ensure legitimacy, comparability, and transparency, all documents related to the evaluation procedures and experts' reports are published on ANVUR's website

ANVUR places a strong emphasis on the development and improvement of its quality system, with specific attention given to the following aspects:

1. The continuous enhancement of ANVUR's quality system through the revision of existing evaluation frameworks and procedures. This process involves self-reflection, taking into account feedback from the Advisory Board and external stakeholders ([par. 7](#)). Noteworthy recent

examples include the development of the AVA 3 model for periodic institutional and programme assessments, contribution to the new *PhD Regulation* and related *Guidelines*, and the initiation of a pilot procedure for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions. Following a recommendation from ENQA, in both cases, feedback was provided to the stakeholders regarding the implementation of the comments and suggestions received by them. Feedback is also collected through questionnaires completed by expert panels and evaluated institutions. Ongoing efforts involve revising questionnaires for gathering **student opinions**, including the development of a questionnaire outline specifically for **PhD students**. Furthermore, ANVUR is implementing a new format and procedure for systematic data collection on research and development and third mission activities conducted by universities, known as SUA-RD/Third mission

2. The approval of a **Gender Equality and Positive Actions Plan**, aimed at pursuing gender balance in all agency activities, with specific objectives and actions related to five intervention areas (measures aimed at promoting work-life balance, without gender discrimination; balanced gender composition in expert groups and working groups; gender balance in recruitment and career progressions; integration of gender dimension in the agency's thematic analyses; measures against gender-based violence, harassment, and sexism). Additionally, the *Gender Equality and Positive Actions Plan* strives to foster and plan initiatives that support a culture of equal opportunities and organisational well-being within ANVUR
3. The integration of new IT platforms and instruments to assist and facilitate the experts' work and the management of the evaluations by ANVUR's staff

All the aforementioned initiatives allow ANVUR to continuously monitor the quality and integrity of its activities, also with the contribution of external stakeholders. The present self-assessment exercise has identified areas for further improvement, including the necessity for an external review of the Agency's quality management system and the formalisation of a comprehensive internal QA policy. These planned measures aim to align and formalize procedures that have already been largely adopted by ANVUR. Providing additional practical training sessions for experts could assist in aligning their judgment criteria. Enhancements in the flow of internal and external communication would also be beneficial, promoting a positive, transparent, professional, and independent image of the Agency among its various stakeholders (see **par. 9** and **par. 10**).

#### Supporting evidence

- **Legislative Decree no. 33/2013** outlines the transparency obligations that the agency must fulfil.
- ANVUR **Triennial Activity Plan** outlines the strategic orientations and objectives of the Agency in various areas of activity, which are updated annually. In accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2 of **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** the Agency's Triennial Activity Plan must be submitted to the Ministry for approval and feedback.
- The triennial **Performance Plan** converts ANVUR's strategic orientations into specific objectives, including actionable steps, measurable indicators, target outcomes. This plan is updated annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.
- The Integrated Activity and Organization Plan (**PIAO**) is voluntary adopted by ANVUR and aims to enhance the level and quality of staff and stakeholder involvement.
- The **Three-year Plan for Prevention of Corruption and Transparency** aims to improve ethical standards by mapping the Agency's processes.
- ANVUR **Code of Ethics** serves as a framework for ethical decision-making, offering guidance on moral standards and responsibilities for both ANVUR's staff and experts. It is based on the principles set forth in art. 2, 1 of **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**.
- The monitoring activities of the **OIV** offer external oversight, fostering transparency, impartiality, and accountability. This, in turn, enhances credibility and builds trust among stakeholders.
- The **CUG** promotes organizational well-being, equal access, and professional development opportunities for all employees. CUG regulation is available at this [link](#).
- The **Gender Equality and Positive Actions Plan** is a new important tool, aimed at pursuing gender balance in all agency activities.

## 5.7 ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

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

The Italian regulatory framework does not mandate ANVUR to undergo external evaluation. However, the agency voluntarily pursued its first external review in 2018 and was subsequently granted ENQA membership for a period of five years in June 2019. This was considered a significant milestone in ANVUR's improvement and development within the framework of the ESG. The external review process offered an opportunity to assess the Agency's evaluation activities over its initial seven years and their alignment with the ESG. It allowed for an examination of strengths, weaknesses, and areas for further improvement. The expert panel's recommendations resulted in several actions to be undertaken by ANVUR before the next external review, including the revision of evaluation standards and guidelines, the implementation of new procedures, and the optimisation of internal processes. ANVUR also voluntarily applied for a progress visit in September 2021, which specifically addressed three critical aspects highlighted by the panel: QA in the AFAM sector, the application of the ESG in the QA of PhD programmes, and the enhancement of complaints and appeal procedures. The visit provided valuable and constructive feedback on the progress made thus far and outlined further steps to be taken.

The first cyclical external review and its subsequent activities also played a crucial role in solidifying the culture of external evaluation within ANVUR, and reinforced the Agency's sense of responsibility towards national and international stakeholders. The second ENQA review, along with the application for inclusion in the EQAR register, is viewed by ANVUR as a forward-moving stride within an ongoing process of enhancement and development.

In 2023, ANVUR applied for recognition by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) to support the internationalisation of medical higher education in Italy. In May 2023, the Agency hosted a visit from a panel of international experts who examined the application and relevant documents. During their visit, the panel participated in the periodic assessment of Humanitas University in Milan and engaged in discussions with the Governing Board and the ANVUR expert panel responsible for the procedure. The international WFME experts will observe ANVUR's decision-making process, which is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2023; subsequently, they will prepare a report based on their observations, which will be considered by the WFME Board in determining ANVUR's recognition. The process of preparing the WFME application took place concurrently with the revision of the standards for the periodic accreditation of medical programmes under the AVA 3 system. This parallel effort helped to clarify and enhance certain aspects of the accreditation standards.

### Supporting evidence

- The documentation related to ENQA membership is accessible on [ANVUR](#) and [ENQA](#) websites.
- The documentation related to WFME [accreditation](#) procedure is accessible on ANVUR [website](#).



## 6. Design and implementation of the Agency's EQA activities

### 6.1 ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

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

It is recommended that ANVUR extend consideration of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG to all of the Agency's external QA activities falling within the scope of the ESG.

EQAR panel noted that ANVUR fully integrates Part 1 of the ESG in AVA procedures, but that AFAM and PhD accreditation procedures cover only some aspects of ESG 1.1 - 1.10.

ANVUR's EQA procedures are designed to work in conjunction with the IQA mechanisms and processes in place at the evaluated institutions. Since the previous external assessment, ANVUR has endeavoured to enhance and formalize its approach to evaluating and monitoring the effective implementation of the internal QA processes described in the ESG part 1 by the evaluated institutions.

#### *Universities*

The actors involved in the internal QA of universities are defined by law. In addition to the governing bodies (Rector, Administrative Council, Academic Senate), they include, for each university:

1. The University Evaluation Board (Nucleo di Valutazione, NdV). The NdV is the independent evaluation body responsible for checking continuously the quality of education and research within the university and for ascertaining the overall quality of the processes, contributing to the improvement of the internal self-evaluation system (see [par. 4.3.1](#))
2. The University Quality Committee (Presidio della Qualità di Ateneo – PQA). The PQA is an internal body responsible for promoting the culture of quality, providing advice on QA issues to other university governing bodies, monitoring QA processes and supporting their implementation. It is composed of faculty members from different disciplinary areas, with roles of responsibility in teaching, research, and the university's third mission, and technical-administrative staff. Usually, it also includes one or more student representatives
3. The Joint Teaching Staff – Student Committee (Commissione Paritetica Docenti-Studenti – CPDS). The CPDS is an internal QA team for individual study programmes or groups of programmes, composed of an equal number of faculty members and students. It is responsible for monitoring the educational offering, the quality of teaching, and the services provided to students. It identifies indicators for the evaluation of results and formulates opinions on the activation and suppression of study programmes. It prepares an annual report that considers the whole educational offer, with particular emphasis on students' opinions

The initial accreditation of study programmes and the periodic institutional and programme assessment are ruled by the AVA system, which was originally designed in compliance with the ESG, as explicitly mandated by law. The previous review panel therefore concluded that ANVUR fully integrates Part 1 of the ESG in its procedures. Within this framework, university IQA refers to a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) model that includes the following activities:

1. Planning of the study programmes
2. Institutional and programme self-evaluation
3. Cyclic review of the institutional QA system and of the study programmes
4. Comment on the annual monitoring indicators
5. TECO – Tests of Competences [if available]
6. Annual reports of the University Evaluation Board and of the University Quality Committee

The AVA system does not provide a specific organisational model but defines effective and transparent procedural requirements that involve key QA players, with the aim of enhancing the autonomy of institutions, while respecting their diverse characteristics and strategic choices. The recent revision of the AVA system has explicitly stated and improved its adherence to the ESG, further strengthening the role of students in internal and external evaluation processes, and the connection between internal and external QA. The other EQA procedures included in this review have been assigned to ANVUR by specific pieces of legislation: they also use the ESG as main reference, although without one-to-one adherence as in the AVA activities.

The QA of PhD programmes and their initial accreditation and periodic assessment deserves separate consideration. The new *Regulation*, published by the MUR at the end of 2021 based on ANVUR's proposal, formally take the ESG into account and include the following provisions:



1. Initial programme accreditation conducted by ANVUR in explicit compliance with the ESG, which may involve external experts and on-site visits for specific PhD programmes
2. A QA system inspired by the ESG
3. Periodic monitoring and assessment activities carried out with the support of the University Evaluation Boards, that may be included within the periodic evaluation institutional and programme assessment (AVA system)

A mapping grid of that summarises how each EQA activity meets ESG Part 1 standards is provided below:

ESG	AVA 3				Other EQA procedures	
	Initial accreditation of new study programmes	Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes	Initial accreditation of PhD programmes	Periodic assessment of PhD programmes	Initial accreditation of universities and their study programmes	Initial accreditation of SAS (requirements defined by Law 439/2013)*
1.1	not applicable	Standard A.1; A.2;A.3 D.CDS.1.1	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1g; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 3.2. Educational Project	D.PHD.3	Requirements A, B1, B2 and B4	Section B Requirements: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation; QA policies and strategies
1.2	Objective I.1; I.2; I.3; I.4	Standard D.1-2; D.CDS.1.2;D.CDS.1.3	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.6 par. 2, Art. 8; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 3.2. Educational Project	Standard D.2D; PHD.1	Objective I	Section B Requirements: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation; QA policies and strategies
1.3	Objective III.1;III.2;III.3;III.4;III.5	Standard A.5; D.2 D.CDS.1.4;D.CDS.1.5.D.C DS.2.1;D.CDS.2.3	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1f; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 3.2. Educational Project	Standard D.2; D.PHD.2	Objective II	Section A Requirements: Students, Teaching Staff, Students' services, Teaching
1.4	Objective II.1;II.2;II.3;II.4	Standard D.3 D.CDS.2.2;D.CDS.2.4;D.C DS.2.5;D.CDS.2.6	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art. 8. Methods of access to PhD Programmes and attainment of the degree	Standard D.3; D.PHD.2	Requirement B2; Objective II	Section A Requirements: Students, Teaching Staff, Students' services, Teaching
1.5	Objective IV.1	Standard B.1.1; B.1, 3 D.CDS.3.1	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1a; Art. 6. Par. 3-6; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 Par. 3.1. PhD Programme Board	Guidelines for the accreditation of PhD programmes par. 3.1	Requirement B3	Section A Requirement: Teaching staffSection B Requirement: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation
1.6	Objective IV.1; IV.2; IV.3; IV.4	Standard B.3; B.4; D.2.4 D.CDS.3.2	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1c-d-e; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 3.3. PhD students and scholarships, Par. 3.2. Educational Project	Standard D.PHD.2.3-2.4	Objective II	Section A Requirements: Structural requirements, Students' services
1.7	Objective I.4; III.5	Standard B.5 D.CDS.2.5;D.CDS.2.6	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1g	Standard B.5	Not applicable	Section B Requirement: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation
1.8	Not applicable	Standard B.5.1; D.3.2; D.CDS.1.2;D.CDS.1.3	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.8 par. 2-3	Standard B.5.1; D.3.2; D.PHD.1.5	Not applicable	Section B Requirements: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation; QA policies and strategies
1.9	Not applicable	Standard C D.CDS.4.1;D.CDS.4.2	Ministerial Decree 226/2021 Art.4 par. 1g; Ministerial Decree 301/2022 Introduction	Standard D.PHD.3	Requirement B4	Section B Requirements: Strategic vision, Objectives and School organisation; QA policies and strategies; Internationalisation
1.10	Not applicable	Mandatory by law	Not applicable	Accreditation procedure every 5 years; annual verification	Not applicable	Mandatory by law
Docs	<a href="#">link</a>	<a href="#">link</a>	<a href="#">link 1</a> ; <a href="#">link 2</a>	<a href="#">link</a>	<a href="#">link</a>	<a href="#">link</a>

\* For the SSM (Scuola Superiore Meridionale) a different and ad hoc procedure was applied as the evaluation focused on its capacity to enter in the SAS system after a three-year experimental period.

## AFAM

Despite ANVUR's efforts and the continuous and constructive dialogue with the MUR, the repeated changes in government that occurred in the last five years, along with the delays caused by the pandemic, have prevented the publication of the regulation on the QA of the AFAM system. AFAM institutions, however, are equipped with a system of bodies and processes for IQA, currently undergoing progressive consolidation. In addition to the governing bodies (President, Director, Academic Council) **Presidential Decree no. 132/2003** mandates for all public and private institutions the presence of an AFAM Evaluation Board, responsible for evaluating the results of educational and scientific activities, overall functioning of the institution, and the use of resources. The Board prepares an annual report on the activities and functioning of the institution, also taking into account students' opinions; the report is submitted to the Ministry and ANVUR by the end of March of each year.

For the initial accreditation of AFAM private institutions (see **par. 4.3.2**) ANVUR's mandate refers to the assessment of infrastructures and equipment; quantitative adequacy and scientific profile of the teaching staff; financial resources and sustainability. For periodic assessment, **Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021** has opened the possibility to introduce additional standards in line with the ESG, which has led to the development of a fully ESG-compliant set of experimental standards (see below and **par. 4.3.2**).

As recognised by the previous ENQA panel, evaluation procedures globally take into account the principles outlined in ESG Part 1, although not following a one-to-one correspondence:

### ESG Application in AFAM QA procedures

- 1.1 ANVUR examines the Reports of the AFAM Evaluation Boards annually. These Reports are formally considered in several evaluation procedures, which are summarised below. Since 2017, ANVUR has strengthened its collaboration with the AFAM Evaluation Boards, as they play a significant role in coordinating the self-evaluation activities of AFAM Institutions, through internal review and monitoring of their activities, objectives and outcomes. The main procedures involved are:
  - a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
  - b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
  - c. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
- 1.2 ANVUR considers the design and motivations behind the activation of new AFAM study programmes in its evaluation and approval procedures. The design of the new study programmes should focus on defining the programme's general objectives, which must align with the institutional strategy. Moreover, the learning outcomes should incorporate input from students and other stakeholders. The evaluation of the programmes' design also considers students' progression opportunities, study workload, and available traineeship opportunities. Additionally, the specificity of the objectives in relation to the national, territorial, and international contexts is assessed, considering consultations with stakeholders and relevant sector studies. The adequacy of procedures and methods for credit recognition and past educational attainments is also evaluated. The main procedures involved are:
  - a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
  - b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- 1.3 To ensure that teaching, learning, and assessment follow a student-centered approach, ANVUR refers in its evaluation procedures to the contents of the annual Report of the AFAM Evaluation Board. This report includes a section dedicated to the organization of teaching, in which teaching methodologies are analysed and evaluated (with particular reference to innovative aspects), the adequacy of procedures for admission and final diploma examination, and the specific measures taken to promote the learning of students with disabilities or special educational needs are taken into account.

Evaluation procedures concerned are:

- a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
- b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- c. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes

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**1.4** ANVUR considers regulations covering all phases of the student life cycle (admission, progression, recognition, and certification) in the evaluation procedures of new AFAM institutions and study programmes. For instance, the adequacy of procedures and arrangements for recognising prior educational activities, implemented by study programmes seeking authorisation, is thoroughly examined. Access policies, admission, and students' progression practices are assessed, particularly concerning mid-term and final examinations, recognition, and certification procedures (such as the delivery of the Diploma Supplement or the recognition of foreign diplomas). Evaluation procedures consider all aspects related to students' academic careers, including the accessibility and transparency of students' information. Evaluation procedures concerned are:

- a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
- b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- c. Initial accreditation of new AFAM private institutions
- d. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
- e. Initial accreditation of decentralized branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

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**1.5** Teaching staff quality, adequacy to student numbers, and recruitment policies are central to nearly all AFAM evaluation procedures. ANVUR assesses teaching qualifications based on specific parameters for evaluating the artistic, professional, and cultural profiles of teachers, tailored to the characteristics of each AFAM sector. The evaluation of teaching staff qualifications involves examining the curricula prepared in a defined format, focusing on artistic, scientific, and professional activities, teaching experience in AFAM Institutions or similar roles, research accomplishments, the level of scientific publications, and their impact in relevant publications. International experience is also considered.

Moreover, AFAM institutions are expected to apply fair and transparent recruitment processes following established public evidence procedures.

Evaluation procedures concerned are:

- a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
- b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- c. Initial accreditation of new AFAM private institutions
- d. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
- e. Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

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**1.6** Assessment of financial resources is carried out by ANVUR, with a focus on evaluating the stability of AFAM institutions' funding and endowments to ensure their adequacy for conducting both theoretical and practical teaching activities. Moreover, the financial resources and endowments should enable AFAM institutions to engage in research and artistic production activities. ANVUR expresses its opinion based on evaluating the financial plan, which demonstrates the full financial, logistical, and scientific sustainability of the teaching activities planned for a five-year period.

The compliance of services provided by AFAM institutions to ensure student support is assessed with respect to the following aspects:

- a. Student services (such as accommodation, canteen, cultural activities, and transportation facilities)
- b. Support services for students during their educational journey, including incoming, ongoing, and outgoing tutoring and counselling services, as well as scholarships
- c. Specific support for students with disabilities or special learning needs
- d. Services aimed at supporting foreign students, including incoming mobility practices, assistance in finding accommodation, language support, involvement in social networks like ESN (Erasmus Student Network), and internationalisation services

- e. Library services
- f. Issuance of the Diploma Supplement and other services focused on enhancing transparency and digitisation (websites, programme catalogues)

This is considered in the following evaluation procedures:

- a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
- b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- c. Initial accreditation of new AFAM private institutions
- d. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
- e. Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

- 1.7** The data collected by AFAM institutions for their management activities includes a specific focus on students' opinions surveys. AFAM Evaluation Boards regularly gather anonymous opinions from students regarding educational activities, and these results are included in their annual reports, which are analysed by ANVUR and taken into account in the evaluation procedures. The results of the students' opinions survey are also shared with students, the academic community, and stakeholders through organised initiatives. They serve as a key indicator for implementing continuous improvement measures.

In 2024 ANVUR plans to create specific guidelines to update and standardize the survey procedures, seeking input from various stakeholders of AFAM institutions, particularly student representatives.

Students' opinions are taken into account in the following evaluation procedures:

- a. Initial accreditation of new AFAM private institutions
- b. Evaluation of professionally specialised courses (first- and second-level "Masters")
- c. Periodic assessment of Institutions and their study programmes
- d. Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes (if the new branch is located within a 30 km radius from the central one, students services should not be duplicated but students' opinions will be evaluated separately)

- 1.8** ANVUR's evaluation procedures consider the availability of information from AFAM institutions regarding their activities, services, and programmes offered to students, as well as teaching and learning facilities such as laboratories and libraries. Institutions are expected to provide information to students and stakeholders about various aspects, including the organisation of study programmes, assessment procedures, teaching staff, internship opportunities, mentorship programmes, mobility opportunities, agreements for collaborations with national and foreign institutions, as well as scholarships and any financial support available to students.

The availability, completeness, and transparency of this information are evaluated by ANVUR to ensure that students and stakeholders have access to comprehensive and accurate details about the institution's offerings and resources. The following evaluation procedures are concerned:

- a. Initial accreditation of new AFAM private institutions
- b. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes

- 1.9** A key role in the ongoing monitoring and updating of AFAM study programmes is assigned to AFAM Evaluation Boards, which are responsible for monitoring and evaluating study programmes and overseeing the overall performance of institutions. These Evaluation Boards serve as the primary coordinating bodies for AFAM Institutions' self-evaluation activities, driving a virtuous cycle between objective identification, planning, process monitoring, and result evaluation.

Evaluation Boards act with operational autonomy, ensuring access to relevant data, while institutions support them in this role. Their regular monitoring activities aim to continuously enhance both the study programmes and the overall institution. ANVUR has progressively extended its support to the Evaluation Boards to facilitate their tasks, fostering the creation

of a network to encourage dialogue, sharing of best practices, and the development of collaborative tools. The following evaluation procedures are concerned:

- a. Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
- b. Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
- c. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
- d. Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

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**1.10** ANVUR is responsible for conducting external QA evaluations of AFAM institutions on a cyclical basis, as defined by law (e.g., after two years from the first periodic evaluation and then every five years).

To conduct these external evaluations, ANVUR appoints AFAM experts who publicly apply to be listed in ANVUR expert Registers. The selection of experts is carried out by the ANVUR Governing Board based on specific criteria, which are also made publicly available in the call for experts. The peer-to-peer approach is utilised for the cyclical review process. The primary objective of the cyclical QA review is to assess whether the initial accreditation criteria are still met and to address any critical issues or challenges that may have arisen since the last evaluation. The following evaluation procedure is concerned:

- a. Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes

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In the past five years, ANVUR has made visible efforts to strengthen and make more evident the connection between EQA and IQA activities and to promote the development of a quality culture within AFAM institutions. These efforts concentrated primarily on two principal areas:

1. The promotion and enhancement of the role of AFAM Evaluation Boards in developing a robust IQA system in AFAM institutions. Main achievements were the establishment of the Network of AFAM Evaluation Boards (see [par. 4.3.2](#)) and the collaborative production of new [Guidelines for the Drafting of the Annual Report of AFAM Evaluation Boards](#). Specific [Criteria and Guidelines for selecting members of the AFAM Evaluation Boards](#) were also approved by the Governing Board in 2022. According to [Law no. 234/2021](#) the remuneration for the Board members, which had been suspended in 2017, is expected to be reinstated by an interministerial decree of the Ministries of University and Research and the Ministry of Finances
2. The definition of an experimental model for the periodic assessment of all AFAM institutions and their study programmes. The model includes a set of nine fully ESG-compliant standards, in line with the AVA standards but adapted to the specificities of higher education in the arts and music as well as to the size and organisational capacity of AFAM institutions

## **ESG AFAM – Pilot project for the period periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions**

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- 1.1** *Standard 1* [9 points of attention] – The institution has a QA policy that is part of its management strategy and is made public. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, also involving external stakeholders
- 
- 1.2** *Standard 2* [10 points of attention] – The institution has processes for the design and approval of study programmes. The programmes are designed to achieve the established objectives, including the expected learning outcomes. The title awarded at the end of the course must be specified and clearly communicated, referring to the corresponding level of the national framework of higher education qualifications and, consequently, to the framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
- 
- 1.3** *Standard 4* [13 points of attention] – The institution ensures that study programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process and that the assessment of progress reflects this approach
- 
- 1.4** *Standard 5* [9 points of attention] – The institution uniformly applies predefined and publicly available regulations for all phases of the student's "life cycle," including admission, career progression, recognition, and certification
-

- 1.5** *Standard 6* [3 points of attention] – The institution ensures the competence of its teaching staff. It adopts fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and professional development of the faculty
- 
- 1.6** *Standard 7* [14 points of attention] – The institution adequately funds learning and teaching activities, as well as ensures sufficient availability of educational resources and support for students
- 
- 1.7** *Standard 8* [4 points of attention] – The institution ensures the collection, analysis, and use of relevant information for the effective management of study programmes and other educational activities
- 
- 1.8** *Standard 9* [7 points of attention] – The institution adheres to high ethical standards in the management of its activities; it publishes clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and easily accessible information about its activities, including study programmes
- 
- 1.9** *Standard 3* [5 points of attention] – The institution systematically monitors and periodically reviews study programmes to ensure they achieve the established objectives and meet the needs of students and society. Any planned or undertaken actions following the review are communicated to all stakeholders
- 
- 1.10** Cyclical external QA is already mandated for private institutions; the new *Regulation* will extend it to public institutions
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**Docs** Pilot Project (**Standard** and **Guidelines**)

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ESG 1-1-1-10 are essentially taken into account in AFAM procedures, but their consideration will have to be more precisely formalized in the future regulation on the QA of the AFAM system (as already done in the standards being tested in the pilot project).

#### Supporting evidence

- Evidence of the integration of ESG Part 1 in ANVUR Procedures can be found in the following documents:

##### Universities

- Initial accreditation of new study programmes
- Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes
- Initial accreditation of PhD programmes
- Periodic assessment of PhD programmes
- Initial accreditation of universities and their study programmes
- Initial accreditation of new SAS and their proposed PhD programmes

##### AFAM

- Pilot Project (**Standard** and **Guidelines**)
  - Initial accreditation of new first-cycle study programmes
  - Initial accreditation of new second-cycle study programmes
  - Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes
  - Initial accreditation of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes
- **Presidential Decree no. 132/2003**, art. 10, mandates for all public and private AFAM institutions the presence of an AFAM Evaluation Board.



## 6.2 ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

*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.*

It is recommended that ANVUR continue efforts to ensure the formal and concrete systematic involvement of student organisations – and the student body in general – in the design and enhancement of its activities.

ANVUR's activities serve the dual purposes of accountability and enhancement. Accountability involves the provision of evidence by HEIs regarding their planned and achieved goals to various stakeholders, such as students, parents, policymakers, employers, and society at large. This process helps build public trust in the quality of higher education. Enhancement focuses on the overall improvement of the higher education system by assisting institutions in identifying their strengths, weaknesses, good practices, and areas for further development and improvement in their activities. The Agency's procedures are framed within the context of compliance with the ESG, which serves as the foundation for ANVUR's operations. Attention has been dedicated to improving adherence to the ESG since the previous external review. The design of fit-for-purpose methodologies strives to achieve these objectives while minimising the workload imposed on institutions to the greatest extent possible. This is achieved by explicitly linking the EQA activities carried out by ANVUR to the IQA activities developed at HEIs.

The evaluation procedures conducted by ANVUR adhere to the applicable regulatory framework. They align with the Agency's mission and objectives (including compliance with the ESG), and consider the results of stakeholder consultations. **Legislative Decree no. 19/2012** states that standards must be periodically subjected to review (at least every three years for programmes and every five years for universities); the aim is to make them constantly consistent with the guidelines defined at European level and in line with the quality objectives and the three-year planning guidelines defined by the MUR. Typically, the implementation of new methodologies or the revision of existing ones follows the following steps, compliant with a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) process:

1. Preliminary discussions take place within the Governing Board to determine the objectives and models to be adopted for the evaluation procedures. These discussions are guided by national legislative and regulatory frameworks, as well as international best practices. Attention is given to addressing the specific evaluation requirements of different programmes, such as medical programmes, PhD programmes, and AFAM institutions
2. When appropriate, ANVUR may establish a working group consisting of representatives from key stakeholders, whose purpose is to engage in discussions regarding the general model and gather ideas and input from stakeholders. This approach has been implemented recently for the revision of the university periodic assessment procedure (AVA 3) and the AFAM pilot procedure
3. Under the supervision of the Governing Board the offices produce an initial draft of the evaluation requirements and procedure, which is then submitted for stakeholder consultation
4. After taking into consideration the feedback gathered from stakeholders during the consultation process, the Governing Board approves an updated version of the evaluation requirements and procedure
5. The documents related to the newly designed procedure, including guidelines and other supportive materials, are published on the ANVUR website. Additionally, these documents are presented during meetings with the evaluated institutions
6. A pilot application of the newly developed methodology is conducted to assess its suitability and make any necessary adjustments. This pilot allows ANVUR to test the model in a practical setting and gather valuable feedback for further refinement

Implementation  
/revision of  
procedures

7. Upon completion of a group of evaluations, a feedback process is initiated through the distribution of questionnaires to both the subjects of the evaluations and the experts involved. This feedback mechanism allows ANVUR to gather valuable insights and perspectives on the evaluation process and make improvements where necessary

Examples of recently implemented or revised procedures include, for university procedures:

1. The initial accreditation of new university study programmes. Following **Ministerial Decree no. 1154/2021** that defines the reference framework for accreditation methods and criteria and the Ministry's specifications on the study offer, the Agency updates every year the **Guidelines for quality design of new study programmes** and the procedure by which universities develop and submit new programmes for initial accreditation. These updates consider the outcomes of the previous accreditation cycle and the feedback received from experts and universities during the accreditation process. To ensure the procedure is fit for purpose, specific requirements are outlined for programmes offered primarily or entirely through distance learning and those offered in decentralised branches. For medical programmes, additional requirements include: a minimum number of teaching staff, the presence of a medical-health area department, the availability of research and support facilities for students and an agreement with the Region where the programme is offered to guarantee the provision of necessary infrastructure such as hospitals and clinics. The involvement of patient associations in the design of the study programme is also suggested as a best practice. Mandatory on-site visits are conducted for programmes in medicine, dentistry, veterinary and healthcare professions, as well as for programmes offered in decentralised branches. These visits aim to verify the presence of appropriate infrastructures, such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, as part of the accreditation process
2. The initial accreditation and periodic assessment of PhD programmes. To address the recommendations provided by ENQA experts on the QA of PhD programmes, ANVUR conducted a comprehensive review of regulations and procedures. In 2020, the Governing Board drafted a position paper as a basis for discussions with the Ministry. ANVUR then proposed a new *Regulation*, which underwent consultations with major stakeholders, including CRUI (Conference of Rectors), CUN (National University Council), and ADI (Association of Italian PhD students). The proposal was subsequently formalised in **Ministerial Decree no. 226/2021**, issued at the end of 2021. A working group was then appointed by ANVUR (including a student representative) to contribute to the drafting of operational *Guidelines for the Accreditation of New PhD Programmes*. These *Guidelines* were adopted by the Ministry in March 2022 under **Ministerial Decree no. 301/2022**. The new *Regulation*, aligned with the ESG, aims to promote the quality of PhD programmes by focusing on the scientific qualification of the Board, training opportunities, and research facilities. It emphasizes the importance of the PhD student as both an advanced learner and an early career researcher, and the need to ensure his/her continuous progress toward becoming a fully scientifically independent professional. Requirements for the periodic assessment of PhD programmes were integrated into the revision of the periodic assessment procedure (AVA 3): this includes evaluating the PhD programme's design, planning of teaching and research activities, and monitoring and enhancement measures. Additionally, the opinions of PhD students, collected through targeted questionnaires, are considered during the evaluation process. Starting from 2023-2024, the initial accreditation procedure will be possibly updated based on the outcomes of the first AVA 3 assessments
3. The periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes. During the years 2021-2022, ANVUR developed the new model for the periodic assessment of universities and study programmes (AVA 3), in compliance with **Ministerial Decree no. 289/2021** (general guidelines of the three-year programming of the university system for the period 2021-2023) and **Ministerial Decree no. 1154/2021** (self-assessment, evaluation, initial and periodic accreditation of universities and study programmes). To revise the AVA requirements and procedures after the completion of the first round of assessments, a working group was established by ANVUR, including representatives from various stakeholder organisations (MUR, CUN, CRUI, CODAU, CNSU, CONVUI, and CONPAQ). ANVUR presented the objectives and general orientations of the new model to the working group and collected the members' suggestions and proposals. A first draft of the requirements was then shared with different stakeholder groups and ANVUR

experts in separate meetings. Feedback received during these consultations was incorporated into the draft, which then underwent a wider public consultation in June 2022. All comments received during the consultation process were carefully analysed by ANVUR Governing Board and used to enhance the assessment model. The revised framework was approved by ANVUR in September 2022. Three pilot visits were then conducted to test the revised model, resulting in further refinements. The updated version of the AVA 3 model, along with related *Guidelines* and support materials, is published on the ANVUR website. Presentations have been organised at the Rectors' Conference and in various universities. The revision of the AVA system aimed to improve the coherence and integration of evaluation dimensions at both the institutional and programme levels, including PhD programmes. The main novelties of the revised version include:

- a. A more comprehensive and harmonised vision of the institutional QA framework, including aspects such as the vision and mission; integration of policies, strategies, and objectives; architecture of the QA system; monitoring of strategies, processes, and results, as well as planning and management of resources
- b. Greater attention to the planning and monitoring of teaching, research and third mission activities
- c. The implementation of PhD programmes assessment
- d. The introduction of additional requirements for the assessment of medical programmes

To consider the sustainability and digital orientation of QA procedures, the new AVA 3 visits incorporate a combination of remote and in-person components. Remote visits are employed for the assessment of study programmes, while in-person visits are conducted for institutional and PhD programme assessments.

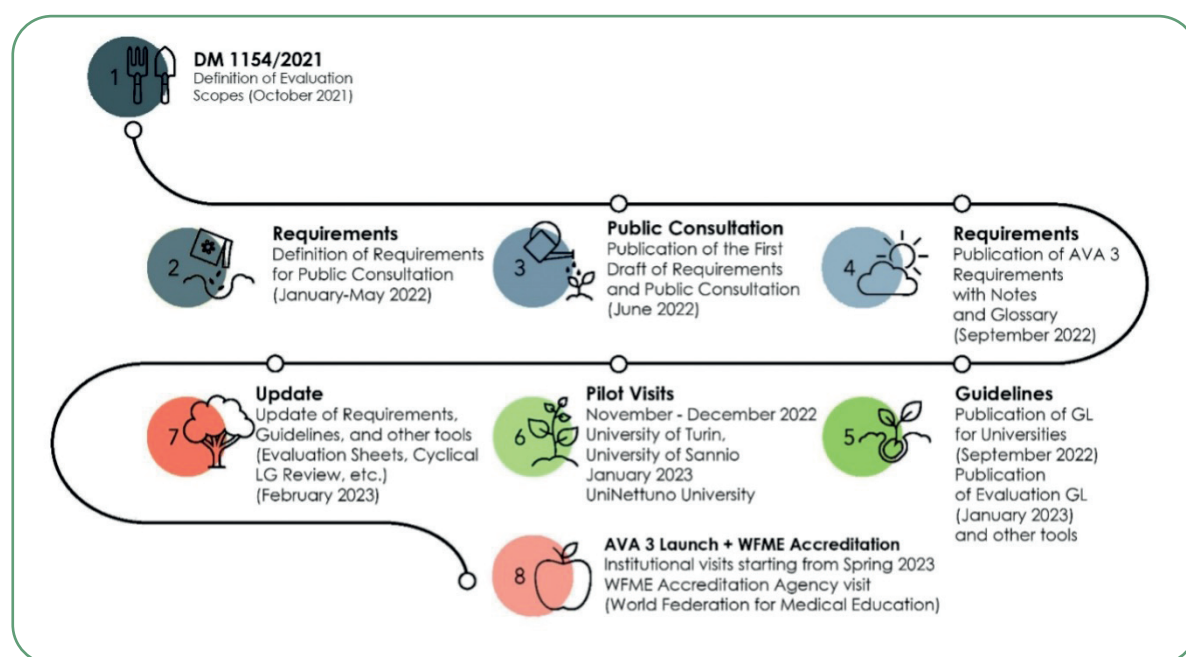


Figure 7 AVA 3 designing process

AFAM QA methodologies have also been significantly improved. As main examples:

1. In 2023 a pilot procedure for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions and study programmes was launched, based on ESG-compliant requirements developed in 2020-2021 with the contribution of an international working group (see [par. 4.3.2](#) and [par. 6.2](#)). A draft of the requirements underwent a wide public consultation at the end of 2022, whose results were discussed with stakeholders' representatives and integrated into the model approved by the Governing Board on 12/01/2023. Between May and October 2023 ANVUR has conducted three pilot visits to selected institutions (two conservatories and an art academy); additional

experimental visits are planned for 2024-2025. The outcomes of the pilot phase will be used by ANVUR to refine the model, incorporating feedback from peer-review experts and evaluated institutions. The updated model will undergo another round of stakeholder consultation before its final approval. The assessment requirements for AFAM institutions have a simpler structure compared to those for universities, tailored to the dimensional and typological characteristics of AFAM institutions (for further details see [par. 6.1](#))

2. In June 2021, the composition of the panels appointed by ANVUR for the accreditation of Institutions and programmes in the AFAM sector (CEV – AFAM) was formally revised, to institutionally include student members and to redistribute the competencies among the different components. For instance, the economic sustainability of new programmes is now evaluated by experts with a professional background in economy and finance

As the above example shows, ANVUR operates within a framework of collaborative evaluation, adopting a stakeholder-oriented approach. In line with recommendations from ENQA, ANVUR has placed significant emphasis on enhancing student participation in the design and implementation of evaluation procedures. However, certain challenges remain, due to the frequent turnover of students and their involvement in working groups, which is not always guaranteed. More generally, in the pursuit of improving suitable methodologies, some issues still need to be addressed. They include the reduction of administrative burdens on HEIs; improvements in the presentation of documentation aiming at greater formal clarity and elimination of redundancies; more interactive expert training sessions where participants can practice the activities that are normally held during the evaluation procedures; better alignment of assessment criteria and metrics. These efforts aim to streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and promote more effective and consistent evaluation procedures.

#### Supporting evidence

- Working groups ([link](#)).
- Documentation of Stakeholder Engagement and satisfaction surveys available on request.
- [AFAM Pilot projects and pilot visits](#).

## 6.3 ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes

*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.

It is recommended that ANVUR increase the usefulness of the AFAM accreditation system, implementing processes compatible with the AVA system and adapted to the AFAM institutional context.

In general, the procedures developed by the Agency cover the following aspects:

1. A self-assessment by the institution
2. A review by a peer-review panel (see [par. 6.4](#))
3. The formulation of an evaluation proposal by the peer review panel, in the form of a report (published on ANVUR website at the end of the procedure), that may include an accreditation/non-accreditation proposal or a graduated judgement (in the case of periodic assessment procedures)

4. The examination of the final version of the report (including replies to the observations made by the institutions) by the Governing Board and the adoption of the final accreditation proposal
5. The follow-up of the recommendations received (through the annual report of the University/AFAM Evaluation Boards and the monitoring of indicators). In case of relevant problems, ANVUR may decide to conduct an additional visit

Goals and expectations of each evaluation procedure, as well as the evaluation standards adopted, the list of documents required to the institutions and the procedural flow are clearly defined in the relevant documents/guidelines published on ANVUR website.

A summary of the main steps involved for each procedure is offered in the following table (Table 10):

QA process	Self-assessment	External assessment	Document analysis	Site visit	Panel's report	Governing Board's decision	Follow up
<i>Initial accreditation of new universities and their proposed study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO, in case of negative evaluation /YES, mandatory in case of positive evaluation	YES	YES	NO
<i>Initial accreditation of new Schools of Advanced Studies and their proposed PhD programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
<i>Initial accreditation of new university study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO (YES, mandatory for medical and healthcare programmes and for programmes offered in decentralised branches; possible in other cases if deemed necessary)	YES	YES	YES
<i>Initial accreditation of new university PhD programmes</i>	YES	NO	YES	NO (YES, possible for PhD offered by online universities)	NO	YES	YES
<i>Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO (YES if deemed necessary)	YES	YES	YES
<i>Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO (YES if deemed necessary)	YES	YES	YES
<i>Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO (YES if deemed necessary)	YES	YES	YES
<i>Periodic assessment of private AFAM institutions and their study programmes</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions and their study programmes (pilot procedure)</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 10 Main steps of ANVUR procedures



Details on the individual aspects of the procedures are given below:

### 1. Self-assessment

The self-assessment phase usually consists in the upload of a set of documents onto a platform and normally includes the compilation of a self-assessment template defined by ANVUR.

For the initial accreditation of new universities and for most of AFAM procedures, requested documents are aimed at qualifying the scientific profile, structure and organisation of the proposing institution; the design of its QA system; the spaces, facilities and services offered to the students; the quantitative and qualitative adequacy of the teaching staff and the economic and financial sustainability of the project.

Templates used for the initial accreditation of study programmes aim at documenting the quality of the new programme's design; the motivations for its establishment and the clear definition of its cultural and professional profiles; the provision of a student-centred teaching, delivered through flexible methodologies; the adequate endowment of teaching and technical staff and facilities. Templates are customised to some extent for conventional, medical or distance programmes. For each new proposed study programme, the university is required to submit a design document, prepared following the *Guidelines* provided by ANVUR, which are updated yearly.

In the periodic assessment procedure, the institution is requested to carry out an analysis of its achievements in relation to the assessed standard and guidelines, based on documentary evidence and a set of indicators; it is also asked to describe the improvement actions taken or planned. The new experimental periodic assessment procedure applied to AFAM public institutions follows a similar pattern, also requiring the evaluated institutions to submit a self-assessment document based on the structure of the evaluation standards.

SAS applying for initial accreditation must produce a programmatic document that sets out the mission that the School identifies for itself within the university system (including its place on the international scene); the aims and strategies of its highly qualified educational and research offer; the resources allocated to teaching and research; the economic and financial sustainability of the project and the School's own vision of QA policies.

Self-assessment is a vital foundation for the evaluation and accreditation process. It enables institutions to identify strengths, address areas for improvement, and align their programmes with national and international quality standards. Through self-assessment, Institutions aim to demonstrate their commitment to continuous enhancement of their educational endeavours.

### 2. External assessment

An external assessment is part of all evaluation procedures:

1. The *ex-ante* procedures for the accreditation of new university and AFAM study programmes are usually conducted remotely through dedicated platforms. Since the programmes are not yet active, there is typically no need for an on-site visit, except in some specific case, in which it is mandatory (see above); nevertheless, it can be arranged for any type of university and AFAM programmes, if deemed necessary to resolve doubts or carry out checks on the documentation provided by the institution. A visit is also mandatory for new universities only in case of a positive on-desk evaluation (if negative, the application is rejected), as well as for the initial accreditation of the Schools of Advanced Studies; it is optional in the case of new private AFAM institutions or decentralised branches thereof
2. the *ex-post* periodic assessment of university and study programmes (including PhD programmes) integrates on-desk document analysis and an on-site visit (fully in presence, in mixed form, or fully online); the same combination of preliminary on-desk analysis and on-site visit also applies to AFAM institutions
3. the initial accreditation of PhD programmes is currently based on the on-desk analysis of a set of information and indicators. The criteria and calculations for outcomes are clearly described, and the system ensures that minimal requirements are met, thereby preventing the accreditation of scientifically weak programmes, despite the high number of proposals to be evaluated. Nevertheless, starting from the 40th cycle, ANVUR plans to experiment the involvement of external experts in the initial accreditation of doctoral programmes with specific characteristics, such as national doctoral programmes

The panel composition varies according to the procedures, as described in [par. 6.4](#); the presence of at least one student is always ensured.



### 3. Document analysis

The self-assessment report or the documents provided by the institutions are analysed by the expert panel responsible for the procedure. The content of the self-assessment report is thoroughly analysed by the expert panel with crucial insights into the institution's adherence to quality benchmarks, its dedication to academic excellence, and its capability to meet the evolving needs of students and society at large. All panel members have access to the full documentation and can express their views on it, even if their attention focuses on the aspects of specific competence.

### 4. Site visit

The results of the preliminary documentary analysis form the basis for the site visit. The visit is mandatory for the initial accreditation of new universities (in case of a successful on-desk examination), as well as for university study programmes offered in specific areas (see above) or required to be activated in decentralised branches of already accredited institutions. An on-site visit is also an integral part of the periodic assessment procedures, both for universities and AFAM institutions. University on-site visits have a duration ranging from 3 to 5 days, plus a half-day for each assessed study programme (including PhD programmes); AFAM visits usually last 2 and a half day. Building on the experience gained during the pandemic, the recently implemented AVA 3 model introduced a hybrid model for the periodic assessment and accreditation of universities and their study programmes, which includes both remote visits for study programmes and PhD programmes and in-person visits for the institution; the remote part of the visit takes place one/two weeks before the in-person one, (in which system experts and student experts always participate). The calendar and agenda of the visit (including the list of interviews to the management of the university, the persons responsible for designing and implementing QA, academic and administrative staff members, student representatives and stakeholders) are established in advance and agreed upon in coordination with the institution. The visit is held during a period when academic lessons are taking places has the following main objectives:

1. Discuss the issues identified in advance by the panel in greater detail, and thus confirm or refute the hypotheses formulated during the preliminary analysis
2. Gather additional information, acquire insights and clarifications
3. Engage in constructive discussion and exchange regarding the future activities and developments planned by the institutions
4. Assess the extent to which the various internal and external stakeholders appreciate the institution's policies and activities
5. Finalise the main assessments and recommendations that will form the backbone of the external evaluation report

Remote or in-person visits are also part of the initial and periodic evaluation of private AFAM institutions and of the experimentation initiated for the periodic assessment of public institutions.

### 5. Panel's report

For all university procedures panel reports (on which see [par. 6.6](#)) follow models defined by ANVUR, which help ensure their completeness and consistency. The reports typically offer a critical assessment of the information provided in advance by the institutions (and any additional elements acquired during the visit, if included in the procedure). The panel highlights strengths and weaknesses and offers recommendations/suggestions based on their evaluation. Panels judgement is provided analytically, with a final summary, based on templates provided by ANVUR. Pending the publication of the regulation on the evaluation of AFAM institutions, the pilot project for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions has implemented a [reporting template](#) similar to that used for the periodic evaluation of universities. In both cases, the panel (CEV/ CEV-AFAM) provides synthetic judgments for each of the evaluated points of assessment, based on the institution's self-assessment and related documents. A summary of the evaluation, including commendations and recommendations, is provided in the concluding section.

The writing of the report is overseen by the President of the panel. A preliminary draft is shared with all panel members for their suggestions and proposals, which are then incorporated by the chairperson. Once the report's completeness, consistency, clarity, and language (see [par. 6.6](#)) have been checked by ANVUR officers, it is sent to the institution for factual comments and subsequently finalised.

## Site visit

## Reporting

## 6. Governing Board's decision

The Governing Board adopts its final decisions after collegial scrutiny of the panel's report, accompanied by a summary of its main findings prepared by the ANVUR staff. The report is preliminarily read and presented to the colleagues by a designated Board member. The Board may make motivated changes to the panel report and even change the accreditation proposal, switching it from positive to negative or vice versa. In the AVA 3 periodic assessment procedure the qualitative evaluation by the panel is complemented by the evaluation of quantitative and qualitative indicators, that allow to assess not only the adequacy of the processes but also the achievement of the results, which contribute to the final evaluation. These indicators are collected by ANVUR using the available ministerial databases and are also made available to the university and the expert panel.

The Board's decision may also include recommendations for improvement and set conditions to be met within a specified timeframe. Once the decision is made, it is communicated to the Ministry, which is responsible for issuing the accreditation or non-accreditation decree, in conformity with ANVUR's resolution.

## 7. Follow-up

The monitoring of recommendations received by expert panels during initial and periodic accreditation procedures primarily falls under the responsibility of the University and AFAM Evaluation Boards. In their annual reports, the Boards must provide specific feedback on how the institutions addressed the gaps identified by the experts during the initial accreditation or periodic assessment procedures. Regarding the university periodic assessment procedure, the University Evaluation Board is responsible for compiling specific forms related to addressing recommendations or conditions (regarding the institution, its visited study programmes, and departments) before the end of the accreditation period. These forms describe the measures and improvement actions taken to resolve the issues highlighted by the experts for each identified point of concern; the deadlines for completing them vary based on the severity of the panel's findings. They are reviewed by the Governing Board, which assesses whether the criticisms have been overcome; they are also made available to the panel responsible for the next visit.

All study programmes, including those not assessed during the visit, undergo a follow-up after three years, which can be expedited if critical issues are reported by the University Evaluation Board or the Ministry. The follow up may lead to the following outcomes:

1. In the event of a positive outcome, the duration of accreditation is automatically extended until the end of the university accreditation period
2. In the event of a negative outcome, accreditation is withdrawn, and the programme is closed through a special decree by the Minister. For students already enrolled, the completion of the study programme is assured

ANVUR also conducts annual monitoring of the results achieved by individual universities in the areas of teaching, research, and internationalisation. This monitoring is done through a set of indicators related to six dimensions: Regularity of student careers; Results of training activities; Internationalisation; Satisfaction; Employability; and Consistency of the teaching staff. The indicators are updated quarterly and transmitted to universities via the [Portal for the Quality of Institutions and Study Programmes](#). At the end of each year, the universities are required to provide a brief critical commentary on the indicators for each study programme by completing the *Annual self-assessment programme form* (SMA – Scheda di Monitoraggio Annuale). In addition to considering their own characteristics and objectives, institutions are also encouraged to pay attention to any significant deviations from national or macro-regional averages; this helps them gain a broader perspective and identify areas that may need further attention or improvement in relation to broader educational trends and benchmarks. ANVUR also offers universities the opportunity to create their own customised indicators, choose benchmarks, carry out analyses, create reports and graphic processing through the Indicators Dashboard, a business intelligence platform specially developed and maintained by ANVUR. Based on the results of monitoring activities, the ANVUR Governing Board has the authority to decide to advance the next evaluation.

### 6.3.1 University procedures

#### Initial accreditation of new universities and their study programmes (link)

Application submission procedures: application sent to the MUR through an IT platform.

Application window: any time (if applications are allowed according to the MUR three years plan).

1. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform
2. MUR verifies admission requirements and sends the application to ANVUR within 30 days
3. ANVUR provides its evaluation within 120 days; an expert panel is usually appointed (five members)
4. If the application is evaluated positively an on-site visit is required before making the final decision
5. The final decision (accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal) is approved by ANVUR Governing Board and transmitted to MUR, accompanied by the experts' report and a summary of the Governing Board's motivations
6. MUR grants or denies accreditation
7. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
8. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

#### Initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies (link)

Application submission procedures: planning agreed between ANVUR and MUR.

Application window: any time (if applications are allowed according to the MUR three years plan or if the SAS is established by Law).

N.B. SAS that underwent accreditation were already authorized by the MUR and operational at the time of ANVUR assessment. The primary goal of the accreditation procedure was to offer schools guidance for the future periodic assessment. A distinct procedure was applied for the accreditation of the Scuola Superiore Meridionale, as its eligibility to enter the SAS system was evaluated after a three-year experimental period.

1. Self-assessment report (and related documents) is submitted through an IT platform (SUA-Scuole)
2. ANVUR appoints a panel of (both Italian and foreign) experts chosen from a specific Register, including a PhD student for SAS providing Doctoral programmes only, and a Master student plus a PhD student for SAS providing also MA programmes
3. A preliminary assessment is performed on desk, at the institutional level. The preliminary expert evaluation is sent to the School before the on-site visit to collect comments, further details, and additional documents
4. The expert panel conducts a mandatory on-site visit
5. The final report (containing the accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal and suggestions for next periodic accreditation) is approved by ANVUR Governing Board and transmitted to MUR
6. MUR grants or denies accreditation
7. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
8. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

#### Initial accreditation of new study programmes (link)

Application submission procedures: to the MUR through online IT platform.

Application window: not later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year preceding the start of the study programmes

N.B. For programme proposed to be offered in a decentralized branch (located nationally or abroad) the new location is also subjected to evaluation.

1. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform (SUA-CdS)
2. CUN (National Universities Council), under MUR request, verifies the requirements about the programme structure. Programmes evaluated positively by the CUN are submitted by MUR to ANVUR

3. Documental analysis is managed by ANVUR through a dedicated IT platform. ANVUR appoints panels of experts for groups of study programmes proposed in the same scientific areas (a minimum of three, plus one for distance programmes)
4. The panel assess the study programmes on desk (also considering the University Evaluation Board report)
5. An on-site visit is mandatory for programmes offered in specific fields (Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine, Health professions); it can be performed for any other programme, if deemed necessary by the experts or by ANVUR
6. The expert preliminary report is made available on MUR IT platform. If the outcome is negative, as per [Law no. 241/1990](#), counter arguments can be presented within ten days, which are considered by the experts. The final proposal by ANVUR Governing Board (accreditation, which may include recommendations/ non accreditation) is transmitted to MUR and uploaded onto the MUR IT platform
7. MUR grants or denies accreditation
8. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
9. The experts' reports are published on ANVUR website

### Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes (link)

Application submission procedures: to the MUR through online IT platform.

Application window: yearly, dates defined by the Ministry.

1. Application is submitted through MUR IT platform (Dottorati)
2. Analysis is performed on desk by ANVUR staff, considering the quality of the proposal, the scientific qualification of the PhD Board, the presence of adequate funding and research facilities
3. The results of the analysis are made available on the MUR platform. If the outcome is negative, the institution is given the possibility to present counterarguments
4. The final proposal (accreditation/non accreditation) is approved by ANVUR Governing Board and transmitted to MUR
5. MUR grants or denies accreditation
6. A summary of the results, including any recommendations, is published on the ANVUR website

### Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes) (link)

Application submission procedures: no application; assessment is mandatory and performed at least every five years for the institutions (could be anticipated in case of major criticalities) and every three years for the study programmes.

Application window: ANVUR defines the schedule, after consulting with the universities.

N.B. At least five months in advance, ANVUR communicates to the universities that are subject to periodic evaluation the study programmes, the departments, and the PhD programmes under evaluation, as well as the exact dates for the on-site visit.

1. ANVUR appoints an expert panel (at least five members, depending on the size of the university and the study programmes to be assessed)
2. The university under assessment sends information about the Institution, study programmes and PhD programmes through a dedicated IT platform at least eight weeks before the on-site visit
3. The expert panel conducts a preliminary documentary analysis
4. An on-site visit is mandatory (typically in mixed form)
5. The expert panel drafts a preliminary report which is sent to the university for factual comments and counter-arguments
6. The final report drafted by the expert panel takes into account the university's counter arguments
7. ANVUR Governing Board formulates a graded proposal (fully satisfactory; satisfactory; partially satisfactory; non satisfactory) based on the experts' final report and the analysis of a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The proposal is sent to MUR, accompanied by the experts' report and a summary of the Governing Board's motivations
8. MUR approves or denies reaccreditation

9. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
10. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website
11. Follow-up activities are performed by the AFAM Evaluation Board and uploaded to the Boards' dedicated IT platform for ANVUR review

### 6.3.2 AFAM procedures

#### Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions (link)

#### AFAM procedures

Application submission procedures: online through MUR IT platform.

Application window: 1<sup>st</sup> December - 15<sup>th</sup> January of each year.

N.B: Applications are only allowed when the institutions' study programmes have completed a three-year teaching cycle.

1. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform
2. MUR verifies admission requirements and sends the application to CNAM and ANVUR
3. CNAM (National Council for AFAM Higher Education) verifies the structure of the programme; if approved, application is sent to ANVUR
4. ANVUR appoints a panel of experts to assess the Institution and its study programmes (normally 5 members; number varies according to the number of programmes to be assessed)
5. The panel conducts an on-desk assessment; an on-site visit is not mandatory, but it may be organised at the discretion of the panel, if deemed necessary
6. ANVUR Governing Board's advice is provided based on the experts' preliminary evaluation and transmitted to MUR, accompanied by a summary of the Governing Board's motivations
7. MUR informs the institution of the evaluation's outcome. If this is negative, as per [Law no. 241/1990](#), the applicant Institution may present counter arguments to MUR within ten days. Following the request by MUR, the application is reassessed by the expert panel
8. After reassessment by the panel, ANVUR Governing Board formulates and approves its final decision
9. MUR grants or denies accreditation
10. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
11. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

#### Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes (link1; link2)

Application submission procedures: online through MUR IT platform.

Application window: not later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year preceding the start of the study programmes.

N.B. ANVUR's mandate covers the evaluation of new first-cycle study programmes of private institutions and of second-cycle programmes of all institutions. Positive periodic evaluation of already active study programmes by ANVUR is required for the enlargement of the educational offer.

1. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform
2. MUR verifies admission requirements and sends the application to CNAM and ANVUR
3. CNAM (National Council for AFAM Higher Education) verifies the structure of the programme; if approved, ANVUR appoints panels of experts (a minimum of 5; number varies according to the number of programmes to be assessed)
4. The expert panel assesses the Institution and its study programmes (also considering the AFAM Evaluation Board advice)
5. The panel conducts an on-desk assessment; an on-site visit is not mandatory, but it may be organised (in presence or at distance) at the discretion of the panel, if deemed necessary
6. ANVUR Governing Board's advice is provided based on the experts' preliminary evaluation and transmitted to MUR, which may be accompanied by recommendations
7. MUR informs the institution of the evaluation's outcome. If this is negative, as per [Law no. 241/1990](#), the applicant Institution may present counter arguments to MUR within ten days. As per MUR's request, which can be made only once, the application is reassessed by the expert panel

8. After reassessment by the panel, ANVUR Governing Board formulates and approves its final decision, which is transmitted to MUR
9. MUR grants or denies accreditation
10. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
11. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

### Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions (link)

Application submission procedures: online through MUR platform.

Application window: between December 1<sup>st</sup> and January the 15<sup>th</sup> of the year preceding the start of the study programmes.

N.B. Positive periodic evaluation by ANVUR of already active study programmes is required for the enlargement of the educational offer in a decentralized branch (already authorized). The evaluation of both the main branch and all branches of the applicant Institution is required for the authorization of new study programmes in a new decentralized branch.

1. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform
2. MUR verifies the requirements and sends the application to CNAM (only for study programmes with a new curriculum framework); if approved, application is sent by ANVUR
3. ANVUR appoints a panel of experts (minimum 5 members) to assess the institution, its study programmes and all its decentralised branches (for study programmes aiming at offering a new curriculum in a new decentralised branch); the advice of the AFAM Evaluation Board is also considered
4. The panel conducts an on-desk assessment and drafts a preliminary report; an on-site visit is not mandatory, but it may be organised (in presence or at distance) at the discretion of the panel, if deemed necessary
5. ANVUR Governing Board's advice is provided based on the experts' preliminary evaluation and transmitted to MUR
6. MUR informs the institution of the evaluation's outcome. If this is negative, as per [Law no. 241/1990](#), the applicant Institution may present counter arguments to MUR within ten days. As per MUR's request, which can be made only once, the application is reassessed by the expert panel
7. After reassessment by the panel, ANVUR Governing Board formulates and approves its final decision, which is transmitted to MUR
8. MUR grants or denies accreditation of the new study programme(s) and the new decentralised branch, in case of new study programme(s) offering a new curriculum
9. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
10. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

### Periodic accreditation of AFAM private institutions and programmes (link)

Application submission procedures: online through MUR IT platform.

Application window: 1<sup>st</sup> December - 15<sup>th</sup> January of each year.

N.B. Already authorized Institutions which want to enlarge their teaching offer must preliminarily undergo periodic evaluation and send the request to MUR within the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.

1. Already authorised private Institutions should undergo periodic evaluation after the completion of the second and fifth years of activity and subsequently every five years
2. Application (and related documents) is submitted through MUR IT platform
3. ANVUR expert panel is appointed (typically five members) and assesses the Institution and its study programmes, also considering the documentation by the AFAM Evaluation Board
4. The panel conducts an on-desk assessment and drafts a preliminary report; an on-site visit is not mandatory, but it may be organised (in presence or at distance) at the discretion of the panel, if deemed necessary



5. ANVUR Governing Board's advice is provided based on the experts' preliminary evaluation and transmitted to MUR
6. MUR informs the institution of the evaluation's outcome. If this is negative, as per [Law no. 241/1990](#), the applicant Institution may present counter arguments to MUR within ten days. As per MUR's request, which can be made only once, the application is reassessed by the expert panel
7. After reassessment by the panel, ANVUR Governing Board formulates and approves its final decision, which is transmitted to MUR
8. In case of a positive outcome, the Institutions is then eligible to apply for new study programmes
9. Appeals and complaints procedures may be initiated
10. The experts' report is published on ANVUR website

### Periodic assessment of AFAM public institutions – experimental procedure ([link](#))

Application submission procedures: expression of interest to undergo pilot visit is sent to ANVUR and MUR.

Application window: ANVUR schedules the evaluation and the on-site visit according to the institution's availability.

N.B. After the end of the experimental phase, the procedure will be submitted to consultation and subsequently updated. Its final steps will be then aligned with those in force for the universities' periodic assessment procedure.

1. Expression of interest is voluntarily sent by the institution to ANVUR and MUR
2. ANVUR selects Institutions and study programmes to be assessed and schedules the evaluation activities
3. An expert panel is appointed by ANVUR (5 members)
4. About two months before the visit, the institutions prepares a self-assessment report, based on a model provided by ANVUR
5. The self-assessment report and the related documents are analysed on-desk by the expert panel
6. An on-site institutional visit is mandatory
7. The expert panel drafts a preliminary report which is sent to the university for factual comments and counterarguments
8. The final report drafted by the expert panel takes into account the university's counter arguments
9. ANVUR Governing Board examines and approves the experts' final report. The report is sent to MUR, accompanied by a summary of the Governing Board's commendations and recommendations

The primary area for further improvement relates to AFAM procedures, despite substantial progress in aligning the AFAM QA system with international best practice: the issuance of the regulation on the evaluation of AFAM institutions is a necessary step to harmonize the procedures and extend them to all public and private institutions. In the meantime, in recent years, ANVUR has significantly strengthened the role of AFAM Evaluation Boards to promote and oversee the implementation of IQA procedures in both public and private AFAM institutions. The absence of a database of indicators similar to those available for universities is also a critical issue that still needs to be addressed.

#### Supporting evidence

- Initial accreditation of new universities - [Template](#).
- Initial accreditation of new SAS - [Template](#).
- Initial accreditation of new study programmes - Templates: [Study Programmes](#); [Health Area Study Programmes](#); [Distance Learning programmes](#); [Decentralised Branches](#).
- Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes (including PhD programmes) - Templates: [Institution](#); [Study Programmes](#); [Health Area Study Programmes](#); [PhD Programmes](#); [Departments](#).
- If the experts preliminary report is negative, Article 10 of the [Law no. 241/1990](#) allows for the submission of counter arguments within ten days.

## 6.4 ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts

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

It is recommended that ANVUR involve student evaluators in all external quality assurance activities. EQAR noted that if student evaluators have an equal role in panels there are no grounds for paying them less. EQAR further underlined that the lack of involvement of student experts in ANVUR's other activities is a matter of concern.

### ANVUR expert Registers

ANVUR's external QA procedures typically involve panels of peer-review experts consisting of reviewers with diverse profiles. These reviewers are selected by the Governing Board from the ANVUR expert Registers, which comprise experts from various fields of expertise:

1. University and AFAM QA System experts
2. University and AFAM Review coordinators
3. University and AFAM Discipline experts
4. University and AFAM Student experts (including PhD students)
5. Financial sustainability experts
6. Distance-learning experts
7. Highly qualified experts for the evaluation of Schools of Advanced Studies (SAS)
8. PhD student experts for the evaluation of SAS
9. AFAM IQA experts



Figure 8 Peer Review Experts: requirements (in black) and general tasks (in red)

The composition of the panels varies depending on the specific evaluation procedure (see below). In accordance with an ENQA recommendation, all panels now include at least one student expert. Since 2021, AFAM peer review panels, similar to those utilised in university procedures and including student experts (CEV AFAM), have replaced the previous single expert team composed of seven members, resulting in a more comprehensive and analytical assessment. Both for University and AFAM procedures, student evaluators are remunerated at the same rate as other panel members based on their assigned task, not their role.

Experts listed in the ANVUR Registers are recruited through public calls, which are published on the ANVUR website and promoted within the university and AFAM community and stakeholder associations. The selection process for reviewers is conducted with great care, and specific requirements are defined for each category of experts, as outlined in the [Procedural Guidelines for the Composition of the AFAM and University Evaluation Expert Registers](#). In the past two years, also in response to the feedback received during the previous ENQA visit, the recruitment procedure has undergone various innovations aimed at expanding the pool of available experts, increasing international participation, and fostering dialogue and the exchange of best practices between universities and AFAM institutions. All calls for experts remain open for submission at any time, and candidate evaluations are conducted periodically to verify eligibility requirements. Calls for discipline experts, student experts, and financial sustainability experts (a new profile introduced in 2022) are translated into English to encourage the participation of foreign candidates. These calls are also announced through international channels, including the ENQA members' list. Additionally, efforts have been made to collaborate with ESU (European Students' Union) to publicize the calls for student experts; a formal agreement between ANVUR and ESU for the provision of international student experts has been signed in July 2023.

All eligible experts take part in face-to-face or remote training sessions held by Governing Board members, ANVUR officers and external experts. Topics include the reference regulatory context; the standards and requirements for the individual evaluation procedures and their compliance with the ESG; the management of the evaluation process and the drafting of the evaluation reports. Training modules remain available in recorded form, and the expert also receive further support to their mission in the form of guidelines or targeted meetings before starting the evaluation process. The individual expert panels receive assistance from ANVUR staff members to ensure the correct implementation of the evaluation protocols and to provide technical support.

Expert panels are carefully selected based on several criteria, including their competence, previous experience, geographical provenance, gender balance, and job rotation. While efforts have been made to attain gender balance within the panels, particularly in selecting panel presidents, there is still work to be done in fully achieving this goal. However, significant improvements have been made, and ANVUR is committed to addressing the gender imbalance to the best of its ability, also through the actions envisaged by ANVUR [Gender Equality and Positive Actions Plan](#).

The utmost attention is paid to avoid conflicts of interest. Experts are bound to respect ANVUR [Code of Ethics](#), and they also sign a confidentiality commitment. They cannot perform more than a set number of evaluations during the term of their contract, which is submitted to the approval of the National Court of Auditors. The procedural *Guidelines* further detail the conditions for ineligibility, including the following:

1. Having served in the last five years with the University evaluated
2. Having relatives up to the 2nd grade serving with the University evaluated
3. Being members of more than 3 university/AFAM Evaluation Boards

All the experts are involved in the whole evaluation procedure and approve the results collectively, although each category contributes more specifically to the aspects within their competence.

In the past five years, considerable progress has been made in the selection of experts and the organisation of the panels' work. However, there are areas that can still be improved. These areas include:

1. The recruitment of international experts. One challenge is the requirement for a good knowledge of the Italian language, since the evaluation processes are conducted in Italian. This can limit the recruitment of international experts and their understanding of the Italian higher education system
2. The alignment of judgment criteria. Ensuring consistency in the application of judgment criteria among different panels within the same evaluation procedure and round is a challenging task
3. Monitoring the quality of experts' work. Enhancing the analysis of reports and systematically collecting feedback from evaluated institutions would help keep the quality of experts' work under control
4. The implementation of expert training. Including emerging topics such as disability and the European approach in expert training would further enhance their knowledge and expertise

The Governing Board is actively analysing these aspects and is planning to implement specific measures to address them.

	AFAM			AVA			Total
Experts	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	
QA System experts	23	57	80			0	80
Review coordinators	23	26	49	39	19	58	107
System Experts	13	38	51	37	83	120	171
Discipline experts	38	73	111	227	318	545	656
Financial sustainability experts			0	8	12	20	20
Student Experts	4	17	21	30	53	83	104
Distance-learning experts			0	16	17	33	33
SAS system experts			0	3	17	20	20
SAS PhD Student experts (PhD area)			0	1	6	7	7
SAS Master Student experts			0		3	3	3
<b>Total</b>	101	211	312	361	528	889	1201

Table 11 Number of experts by type and gender (AVA and AFAM)

Evaluation procedure	Composition of the expert panel								
	President	QA System experts	University and AFAM Review coordinators	Financial sustainability experts	Discipline experts	Distance-learning experts	Student/Phd Student Experts	Experts for the evaluation of Schools of Advanced Studies	Other experts
University									
Initial accreditation of new universities	1	At least 1	1	1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)	One for each online/blended programme	1		
Initial accreditation of SAS			1				1 or 2	5	
Initial accreditation of new study programmes	1				1	One for each online/blended programme	1 PhD student		On the basis of the programme (eg Medicine area expert)
Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes	Starting from the 40th Cycle (year 2024), ANVUR is planning to involve external experts in the procedure (the panel composition is currently being discussed and will be formalised by the end of 2023).								
Periodic assessment of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes)	1	1 for each sub-panel (evaluating a group of programmes, PhDs and departments)	1	1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)	1 (in case of universities offering full distance learning or blended learning programmes)	1 for each sub-panel (evaluating a group of programmes, PhDs and departments)		

follows...

Evaluation procedure	Composition of the expert panel								
	President	QA System experts	University and AFAM Review coordinators	Financial sustainability experts	Discipline experts	Distance-learning experts	Student/Phd Student Experts	Experts for the evaluation of Schools of Advanced Studies	Other experts
<b>AFAM</b>									
Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions	1			1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)		1		1
Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes	1				1		1		1
Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions	1			1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)		1		1
Periodic accreditation of AFAM private institutions	1			1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)		1		1
Periodic accreditation of AFAM public institutions (experimental procedure)	1			1	Several (depending on the number of programmes)		1		1

Table 12 Composition of expert panels for the different procedures

#### Supporting evidence

- ANVUR Experts Registers are available at: [link1](#) (AVA Experts); [link2](#) (AFAM Experts); [link 3](#) (VQR Experts).
- Examples of calls for experts translated into English: [Profile Disciplinary Expert](#); [Profile Expert for the assessment of economic and financial sustainability](#); [Profile AFAM Internal Quality Assurance Expert](#); [Profile AFAM Expert Coordinator](#).
- Details on the Expert training activities can be found in Annexes 05a-c.

## 6.5 ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

*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.*

### Guidelines, protocols and templates

The criteria used for evaluation in all assessment procedures are defined by ANVUR in accordance with legislative provisions and are clearly outlined in the relevant *Guidelines*, which are made publicly available on the Agency's website before the evaluation process begins, to ensure transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders. The criteria used in evaluations are aligned with the ESG, and ANVUR has consistently improved the compliance of its procedures with the European standards. When there are modifications or updates to a procedure, the new evaluation standards are presented in detail to the institutions being evaluated prior to the start of the evaluation campaign. Additionally, ANVUR may provide supplementary documents and tools, such as [Guidelines for the Design of New Study Programmes](#) or [Guidelines for Self-Assessment and Evaluation of University QA Systems](#), to assist institutions in managing their activities in compliance with quality standards. Specific *Guidelines* are also provided (and updated yearly) for the drafting of the annual Report of the University and AFAM Evaluation Boards.

Specific [protocols and templates](#) are made available to assist experts in their evaluation procedures, ensuring that they have the necessary guidance and tools for completing their tasks accurately and comprehensively. These protocols and templates are designed to ensure the completeness and formal adequacy of the evaluation process. To streamline the procedures, promote consistency among expert panels, and facilitate the work of ANVUR staff, IT platforms have been developed, that provide access to the protocols, templates, and other necessary resources, making the evaluation process more efficient and standardised.

Expert training plays a crucial role in ensuring the coherence of their decisions. Training sessions are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the principles underlying the evaluation process and to ensure that they are applied systematically and consistently. Experts are guided to understand that their judgments reflect their opinions based on the analysis of available evidence, including documents and testimonies gathered during site visits. They are encouraged to draft their reports in a constructive manner, including formal outcomes, recommendations, as well as best practices and areas for improvement. The training sessions also serve as an occasion for exchanging experiences and fostering discussions among new and experienced experts. Additionally, meetings may be arranged prior to the start of evaluations, where panel members can interact with ANVUR officials to address any questions or concerns that may arise during the procedure.

To maintain consistency in evaluation findings and outcomes, the reports produced by the panels undergo a thorough review process. They are carefully examined by an ANVUR officer focusing on key aspects such as: a) inclusion of evidence-based statements; b) coherence between textual statements and summary ratings or scores; c) absence of internal contradictions; d) use of clear, objective, and non-judgmental language; e) correct use of the assessment matrix. Any identified inconsistencies are brought to the attention of the panel members, who have the discretion to consider and address them as they deem appropriate. In evaluation procedures involving a site visit, an ANVUR officer joins the panel as an observer, providing continuous support during the visit.

All evaluation procedures consist of two steps. In the first step, the institutions receive a preliminary version of the evaluation report. During this stage, they have the opportunity to review the report, identify any factual errors, and provide observations and clarifications. However, it is important to note that they cannot introduce new documentary evidence at this stage. The panel responsible for the evaluation then examines the institutions' feedback and may consider incorporating

### Two-step evaluation procedure



relevant information, if it deems it appropriate, in the definitive version of its report. This two-step process allows the evaluated institutions to address any inaccuracies or provide additional context before the final evaluation report is completed.

The final decision-making authority rests with the Governing Board. The Board thoroughly examines and discusses the expert reports, based on the presentation made by one of its members, and ultimately reaches a holistic final judgment, which is not bound by a predetermined formula. In cases where the Board's opinion differs from that of the experts, the reasons for the divergence are clearly explained in the Board's resolution. Additionally, the Board may include recommendations and suggestions for improvement alongside those provided by the expert panel. During the decision-making process, the Board has the authority to reevaluate the documentation upon which the panel's proposal is based, if deemed necessary. For a valid session, the Governing Board requires the presence of at least half plus one of its members, with the President or Vice-President being present in any case. In the current composition of the Governing Board, which consists of five members, a minimum of three members is required for a valid session. Resolutions of the Governing Board are adopted by a majority vote of those present, with the favourable vote of at least three members being necessary. The voting process is conducted openly, except in cases involving personal and sensitive data, where a secret vote may be requested by one of the Board members.

The Ministry is responsible for granting or denying accreditation in accordance with the Governing Board' resolution. The decision may be appealed by the institution in accordance with the procedures described in [par. 6.7](#).

Further indications on the expected outcomes criteria for the individual procedures are offered below:

Procedure(s)	Criteria for outcomes
<b>Initial accreditation of new universities and their proposed study programmes</b>	<p>According to Ministerial Decree no. 989/2019, the judgement is based on the following criteria:</p> <p>For the Institution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Transparency</li> <li>– Economic and financial sustainability</li> <li>– Logistic sustainability</li> <li>– Scientific sustainability</li> <li>– QA system</li> </ul> <p>For the proposed study programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Motivations, cultural and professional profiles</li> <li>– Student-oriented teaching and learning</li> <li>– Personnel and facilities</li> </ul> <p>In both cases, a positive evaluation is obtained only if all the requirements receive a positive judgement.</p> <p>In case of a positive evaluation, a site visit is also organised. The final Panel's proposal (positive/ negative) is submitted to the Governing Board.</p>
<b>Initial accreditation of new Schools of Advanced Studies</b>	<p>Considered requirements (in line with <a href="#">Ministerial Decree no. 987/2016</a>) are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Governance</li> <li>– Implementation of the strategic plan</li> <li>– Planning of the study offer</li> <li>– Attractive potential (for researchers and students)</li> <li>– Human resources</li> <li>– Financial resources</li> </ul> <p>Requirements (declined in points of attention) are verified by a five-member panel through document analysis and an on-site visit; each of them receives a brief evaluation by the panel. The panel's final proposal (positive/ negative) is submitted to the Governing Board.</p>

Procedure(s)	Criteria for outcomes
<b>Initial accreditation of new university study programmes</b>	<p>New study programmes are accredited every year through an online procedure, involving a three-member panel, in charge of checking each of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality of project documentation</li> <li>– Motivations, cultural and professional profiles</li> <li>– Student-oriented teaching and learning</li> <li>– Personnel and facilities</li> </ul> <p>Additional requirements are defined for medical programmes (for which a site visit is mandatory) and programmes delivered at distance. A site visit is also provided for programmes offered in decentralised branches. The outcome is an accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal, including panel's recommendations.</p>
<b>Initial accreditation of new PhD programmes</b>	<p>Requirements based on <a href="#">Ministerial Decree no. 226/2021</a> are verified on desk; they concern in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality and objectives of the project</li> <li>– Scholarships</li> <li>– Scientific profile of the coordinator and the scientific board</li> <li>– Training activities</li> <li>– Research facilities</li> </ul> <p>The outcome of the assessment is a proposal of accreditation (if all the requirements are met)/ non-accreditation (if only one of them is not met).</p>
<b>Periodic assessment and accreditation of universities and their study programmes (including PhD programmes)</b>	<p>According to the provisions of <a href="#">Ministerial Decree no. 1154/2021</a>, the new AVA 3 procedure has redefined the requirements for institutional, programme and department accreditation (see <a href="#">par. 6.3.1</a>), declined in indicators and points of attention.</p> <p>The accreditation proposal is based on document analysis and a site visit by an expert panel; analysis of a set quantitative and qualitative indicators is additionally performed by ANVUR and is incorporated in the judgement, according to predefined criteria.</p> <p>The assessment proposal is graduated in four-levels: fully satisfactory (if at least 75% of the points of attention have received this evaluation); satisfactory (if at least half of the points have been assessed as satisfactory or fully satisfactory); partially satisfactory (25-50% of points assessed as satisfactory or fully satisfactory and not more than 50% not satisfactory; a conditional accreditation is proposed); not satisfactory (if more than 50% of the points receive this negative judgement, that leads to a proposal of non-accreditation).</p> <p>The weight of qualitative and quantitative indicators on the formulation of the judgment is explicitly defined in the relevant ANVUR <i>Guidelines</i>.</p>
<b>Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes</b>	<p>Following positive evaluation of the teaching regulations by the National Council for Higher Education in Art and Music (CNAM) for each of the programmes requested by the new institution, ANVUR's experts are charged to evaluate the following aspects, in line with <a href="#">Presidential Decree no. 212/2005</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality of spaces, equipment and student facilities</li> <li>– Qualitative and quantitative adequacy of the faculty (teaching and research)</li> <li>– Financial sustainability of the institution</li> </ul> <p>An accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal, based on the experts' report (including an analysis and a positive/negative judgement on each of the requirements) is submitted to the Governing Board.</p>
<b>Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes</b>	<p>Requests for new study programmes are submitted every year through a dedicated IT platform. For first-cycle programmes requirements are the same as for study programmes proposed by new private institutions; for second-cycle programmes they are more stringent, as defined by <a href="#">Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018</a>. The outcome is an accreditation/ non-accreditation proposal, including panel's recommendations.</p>

Procedure(s)	Criteria for outcomes
<b>Initial accreditation of decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes</b>	<p><b>Ministerial Decree no. 1214/2021</b> has introduced a new procedure for the initial accreditation of decentralised branches of public AFAM institutions, assigning ANVUR the task of verifying the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability (sound financial management, staff resources, services) with regard to the proposing Institution</li> <li>– Sustainability (spaces and facilities; financial and staff resources; student services)</li> </ul> <p>If deemed necessary, a site visit (in person or online) to the decentralised location may be also organised by the panel, that contributes to the formation of the judgement.</p>
<b>Periodic assessment of AFAM institutions and their study programmes</b>	<p>According to <b>Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021</b>, private Institutions are subject to a periodic assessment procedure, aimed at verifying that the initial accreditation requirements remain in force. Loss of one or more requirements results in the revocation of accreditation by the Ministry.</p> <p>The new procedure which is being tested for public institutions has an ESG-based structure (see <b>par. 6.3.2</b>) and is aligned with the one in force for universities.</p> <p>At the end of the experimental phase, the procedure will also lead to an assessment proposal graduated in levels.</p>

In the last five years, concrete steps ahead have been made to revise or better formalize the existing procedures, to make the decision-making process more robust, transparent and consistent. Further improvement might include:

1. Organising expert meetings aimed at discussing and aligning the evaluation criteria
2. Involving peer-review experts in the PhD initial accreditation procedure
3. Introducing a meta-evaluation process of the results of the evaluation procedures (particularly the initial accreditation of study programmes and the periodic institutional and programme assessment)
4. Strengthening the consistency of evaluation outcomes, by ensuring that all panels apply the same criteria and standards in their assessments
5. Conducting regular internal audits and quality checks, to guarantee the integrity and reliability of the decision-making process
6. Enhancing the communication and dissemination of evaluation outcomes, to secure that they are understood and utilised by relevant stakeholders

#### Supporting evidence

- The criteria used for evaluation are publicly available:

##### Universities

- **Guidelines for the quality design of new study programmes for the academic year 2023-2024.**
- **Procedure and evaluation methods for applications of new private universities**
- **AVA 3 Guidelines and support tools.**
- **Guidelines for the initial and periodic accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies.**
- **Guidelines 2023 for the preparation of the NdVs' Report.**

##### AFAM

- **Guidelines for the accreditation of new private AFAM Institutions.**
- **Guidelines for the accreditation of new first-cycle AFAM study programmes (expansion of the educational offerings).**
- **Guidelines for the accreditation of new second-cycle AFAM study programmes.**
- **Guidelines for the accreditation of new AFAM Master's programmes.**
- **Guidelines for the experimentation of the Periodic Accreditation of AFAM Institutions and study programmes.**
- **Criteria and guidelines for the preparation of the annual report of AFAM Institutions' NdVs.**

- **Ministerial Decree no. 14/2018**, Article 8 expanded ANVUR's mandate to include second-level diploma programmes offered by all public and private AFAM institutions.

## 6.6 ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting

*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.*

It is recommended that ANVUR publish full reports by the experts that are not only clear and accessible to the academic community, but also to external partners and other interested individuals. EQAR underlined that, since the publication of summary reports in the case of AVA system evaluations, (...) ANVUR complies partially with the standard.

Since 2019, ANVUR has made significant efforts to address the recommendation of publishing the experts' full reports and making them accessible to a wider audience beyond the academic community. This objective implied internal reflections on the structure, content, and style of the reports, as well as on the training of the experts, to ensure consistent standards of content and formal quality. Attention has also been given to safeguarding sensitive data, in compliance with data protection and privacy legislation.

Reports for the individual EQA activities show both similarities and differences, guided by corresponding protocols and guidelines. Typically, reports provide an assessment for each standard/point of attention, along with recommendations for improvement and the identification of relevant good practices. In certain evaluation protocols, the experts' partial and overall judgments are also expressed in the report. This is the case, for example, in the periodic assessment of universities, where an assessment class is proposed (fully satisfactory, satisfactory, partially satisfactory, or unsatisfactory).

The draft report undergoes a review by ANVUR and is then shared with the institution for factual counterarguments and comments (see [par. 6.7](#)). The final version of the report, incorporating feedback from the experts on the institution's remarks, is discussed and approved by the Governing Board. Subsequently, it is submitted to the Ministry, along with the Board's decision, which may include recommendations or suggestions for further improvement.

Regarding the university periodic assessment procedure, the recommendation from ENQA experts on the publication of experts' reports could only be addressed after completing the first cycle of external reviews for all universities. With the implementation of AVA 3, a new reporting template was introduced, which involved experts compiling evaluation forms for various areas of assessment, including the institution, evaluated study programmes, PhD programmes, and departments. These forms consist of a brief self-assessment provided by the university for each area, followed by a list of documentary sources and the judgment of the expert panel, which includes a reasoned assessment of strengths and weaknesses. The synthesis of judgments on individual points forms the basis for the final judgment. The experts' report, along with the Governing Board's decision, also summarised in a short report containing the main commendations and recommendations, is published in its entirety. This allows for transparency and the dissemination of information related to the assessment process.

The structure of reports for AFAM procedures has undergone revisions in recent years, simplifying their structure and improving clarity and effectiveness, as recognized by the evaluated institutions. The pilot project for the periodic evaluation of public AFAM institutions includes the testing of a template for the final experts' reports, similar to the one used for universities. The reports, along with the Governing Board's decision, are published as part of the evaluation process. The reporting template for other AFAM procedures have also undergone revisions in recent years, to simplify their structure and enhance their clarity and effectiveness. Further revisions and updates will be carried out after the publication of the new regulation on the evaluation of AFAM institutions. The aim is to align the AFAM evaluation procedures more closely with those applied to universities.

### Reporting procedure

### Structure of the reports

Before sending the report to the institution for remarks, it undergoes a thorough proofreading process by one of the Agency's officers, with the purpose of ensuring that it is written in factual and constructive terms, with a clear and accessible style and language. The officer verifies that the content of the report provides the requested information, supported by relevant evidence, and does not give rise to any misunderstandings. Additionally, he/she ensures cross-consistency among reports produced by different panels, even when they refer to different institutions. This step contributes to maintaining a high level of quality and consistency in the evaluation reports.

One Governing Board member is responsible for presenting the report to the Board during the final decision-making process. His/her role is to highlight specific points within the report that may require further reflection or discussion among the Board members. This presentation helps to ensure that all relevant information and considerations are brought to the attention of the Board before reaching a final decision on the evaluation.

Evaluation reports are publicly available on the Agency's website.

Despite significant progress made areas of possible improvement remain, particularly in the training of the expert panels, to achieve greater uniformity, systematisation and homogenisation. To this end, enhancing ex ante and ex post communication between the different expert teams is necessary. The scheduled revision of the ANVUR website in 2024 will include the introduction of a search engine to facilitate direct access to individual reports.

#### Supporting evidence

- Evaluation reports are publicly available on the Agency's website:
  - Initial accreditation of new universities: [2020 and 2021](#).
  - [Initial and periodic accreditation of SAS](#).
  - Initial accreditation of study programmes: [2023-2024](#); [2022-2023](#).
  - Initial accreditation of PhD programmes: [XXXIX cycle](#); [XXXVIII cycle](#).
  - Periodic assessment of institutions and their study programmes: [AVA 3](#); [AVA 1 and AVA 2](#).
  - [Initial accreditation of new private AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes](#).
  - [Initial accreditation of new AFAM study programmes](#).
  - Periodic assessment of AFAM institution and their study programmes ([private institutions](#); [pilot procedure for public institutions](#)).

## 6.7 ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals

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

It is recommended that ANVUR makes more transparent and accessible existing internal mechanisms, the actors involved and the detailed procedures of both complaints and appeals, respectively against procedural issues and all decisions. EQAR underlined the lack of impartial processes for handling appeals, as the appeals are considered by the same body (the Governing Board) making all decisions relating to ANVUR's accreditation procedures. EQAR further noted the lack of a transparent and formal procedure to handle complaints.

ANVUR ensures that institutions have the right to express their concerns and raise complaints regarding the management of an evaluation procedure, as well as report any errors or omissions that may have occurred. The institutions also have the option to appeal against a decision made during the assessment process and request a reconsideration of the outcome.

To uphold the principle of citizen participation in the administrative process, ANVUR follows a general rule that allows institutions access to preliminary evaluation results. This enables them to present counterarguments and provide additional evidence, which is taken into account by the review panels in their final report. ANVUR relies on this final report as the basis for making their ultimate decision regarding the evaluation.

The revision of an ANVUR decision may be requested once on the direct initiative of the concerned (university or AFAM) Institution, as established by **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** and following the procedure defined in the **Organizational and Functional Regulation**. Following recommendations from ENQA and EQAR, as well as feedback received during the ENQA progress visit, ANVUR has developed and approved a new procedure at the end of 2021. This procedure includes the establishment of an independent **Guarantee Committee**, separate from the Governing Board. According to the *Organisational and Functional Regulation* (art. 16), institutions may request a reassessment within ten days of receiving the evaluation, specifically addressing any concerns or issues they may have identified with regard to:

1. Serious irregularities in the procedure leading to the final assessment
2. Glaring inconsistencies or incongruities in the formulation of the final assessment (after the counterarguments made by the Institution), if they substantially affect its outcomes
3. Violations of the Agency's **Code of Ethics**

The **Guarantee Committee** consists of five external members, including a President appointed by the State Attorney and four members selected by the ANVUR Advisory Board from candidates proposed by university and AFAM student and professor organisations. The Committee assesses the admissibility of the request and provides the Governing Board with its findings and recommendations. Based on the Committee's assessment, the Governing Board may choose to: a) reconsider the previous decision, taking into account the newly emerged elements; or b) confirm the original decision.

The Guarantee Committee's composition, scope of authority, complaint formulation and examination procedure, as well as a template for submitting requests, are accessible on a **dedicated webpage**. Illustrations of complaint and appeals procedures, including the newly established Guarantee Committee, were also incorporated into presentations of the AVA 3 model held at several universities.

Up to now, the Committee has reviewed four requests, which were all determined to be inadmissible.

If the outcome of the complaints and appeals process remains negative, the institution has the option to appeal the final decision in the Court of Law, which may order the re-evaluation by the Agency. ANVUR has administrative officers with specific competences to follow the procedure.

According to **Legislative Decree no. 19/2012**, the Ministry of University and Research, as the authority responsible for granting or denying accreditation, has also the power to request ANVUR to revise its final decision, if it deems there are valid reasons for a different judgment. This can occur either by own initiative of the Ministry itself, or in case a HEI signals founded dissatisfaction to the Ministry. The request needs to be motivated and can only be made once. Upon receiving it, ANVUR initiates a new assessment procedure, and, if considered necessary, appoints a different panel of experts. ANVUR is then required to make a new decision within a specified timeframe, typically thirty days, addressing the specific issues raised by the Ministry. This process ensures a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the accreditation decision.

Individuals who report improper behaviour by institutions overseen by ANVUR have the option to submit complaints to the Agency. These complaints are reviewed and addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Governing Board. If judged relevant, they may be shared with the Ministry for further action. ANVUR also has the authority to conduct additional investigations if required, which may result in an expedited evaluation procedure for the institution in question.

Anyone who becomes aware of a single expert's unethical behaviour (not related to a specific evaluation procedure) can report the violation to ANVUR. In such cases, ANVUR engages the Board of Guarantors, which comprises two members of the Governing Board and an external member with a high level of legal expertise who serves as the chair. The Board conducts a hearing with the individual(s) involved and is responsible for the accurate interpretation of the *Code of Ethics* and the proposal of any potential sanctions resulting from its violations.



In accordance with applicable laws, ANVUR has implemented the “PAWhistleblowing” platform as a means to combat maladministration. Potential whistleblowers are granted access credentials to the platform, and an operational manual is provided to assist them with the usage of the application while ensuring the utmost confidentiality of the procedure. The ANVUR official responsible for transparency and corruption prevention, currently the Director of the Agency, is responsible for coordinating the necessary investigations.

Thanks to the received recommendations, ANVUR now possesses a comprehensive and effective system for managing complaints and appeals, with a strong commitment to transparency and fairness throughout the process. The establishment of the Guarantee Committee and the new complaint-handling procedure were communicated to the institutions through the website and during meetings with stakeholders (including the presentation of the new AVA 3 model and meetings with the University and AFAM Evaluation Board). In 2024, ANVUR plans to further improve the visibility and accessibility of complaint and appeal procedures as part of the development of a new, more user-friendly website.

#### Supporting evidence

- According to ANVUR's **Organizational and Functional Regulation** (art. 16), institutions can request a reassessment within ten days of receiving the evaluation.
- ANVUR's **Guarantee Committee** has been established with Governing Board Resolution no. 230 of 27/10/2021.
- Complaints and appeal procedures and relevant documentation/forms are available on the official web-site ([link](#)).
- “PAWhistleblowing” IT platform is the tool provided by ANVUR against maladministration phenomena.
- According to article 16 of ANVUR's **Organizational and Functional Regulation**, Institutions have the option to request a reassessment within ten days.
- HEIs undergoing assessment have the right to request the revision of the decision once, as stipulated in **Presidential Decree no 76/2010**, art. 4, 2.
- The Minister has the authority to request a revision of ANVUR's decision based on **Legislative Decree no. 19/2012**.
- For an example of Guarantee Committee decision see Annex 06a.
- For an example of Request for review by MUR see Annex 06b.

## 7. Opinions of stakeholders

ANVUR is fully responsible for its evaluation activities and their outcomes. Nevertheless, since its establishment, it has actively fostered regular engagement with its key national and international stakeholders across all areas of its operations. In recent years, the Agency has increasingly embraced a participatory assessment approach, where stakeholders play an integral role in defining and implementing evaluation methodologies, criteria, and procedures. The perspectives of stakeholders are extensively incorporated into the Agency's activities and their outcomes, taking various forms. These forms include their involvement in shaping evaluation criteria, models, and procedures, participating in discussions on relevant QA topics, and being included in satisfaction analyses.

The main stakeholders of ANVUR include:

- The international Advisory Board (see [par. 4.2](#)), who convenes regularly to provide opinions and proposals on the activities and strategic initiatives of the Agency
- The Ministry of University and Research (MUR), who is responsible for the accreditation of institutions and study programmes, based on the evaluations conducted by ANVUR. ANVUR maintains active communication and collaboration with the Ministry, respecting each one's roles
- Stakeholders related to the 99 universities, 159 AFAM institutions, and 20 public research institutions. These stakeholders include rectors or presidents, professors and researchers, students, general directors, administrative personnel, and the associations representing these various groups

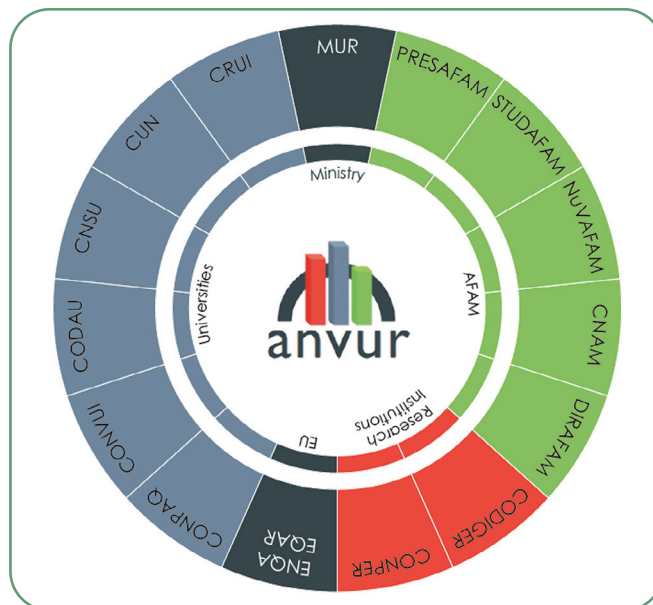


Figure 9 ANVUR's main stakeholders

In an increasingly internationalised higher education and research system, ANVUR also closely interacts with other European and non-European QA agencies and relevant international bodies.

ANVUR's activities are subject to constant exchange with the Agency's stakeholders, that takes place in the following ways:

1. **Public consultations.** Before being finalised, new or substantially updated evaluation methodologies and guidelines adopted by the Agency are submitted to public consultations. ANVUR values the input and proposals provided by these stakeholders, recognising the importance of their expertise and perspectives. The results of the consultations are thoroughly analysed by ANVUR staff with the support of the members of the Governing Board; the way in which ANVUR takes them into account in the finalization of its documents or in the management of the procedures is explained to the stakeholders in feedback meetings. Recent examples are:
  - a. the public consultation on the new AVA 3 requirements
  - b. the consultation on the new *Guidelines* for the annual Report of the AFAM Evaluation Boards
  - c. the consultation on the new standard for the QA of AFAM institutions.

2. *Working groups.* For the implementation or substantial revision of evaluation procedures, ANVUR avails itself of working groups composed of a selection of key stakeholders, including students. Working groups have recently contributed to:
  - a. the identification of the main critical issues of the AVA system, in preparation for its revision
  - b. the definition of the new standards for the periodic evaluation of AFAM institutions
 ANVUR is also regularly invited to join working groups appointed by the Ministry, that involve the participation of various stakeholders. Examples of recently addressed topics are: the criticalities of the AFAM system; the drafting of a Regulation on AFAM PhD programmes; the evaluation of artistic research; online universities; the new teaching paths organised by universities for the training of school teachers.
3. *Establishment of permanent stakeholder networks.* Periodic meetings are organised with the networks of the University and AFAM Evaluation Boards, for the collection of feedback and the exchange of views and good practices on their internal monitoring activities of the institutions.
4. *Public presentations of new evaluation procedures, results of evaluation rounds or thematic analysis.* ANVUR organises information sessions to illustrate new evaluation frameworks and explain the working tools adopted in external evaluation process. Presentations and workshops are also organised to summarise the main results of thematic analysis (such as the reports on disability or on the state of the higher education system) or the results of evaluation rounds (such as the VQR exercise).
5. *Questionnaires and surveys.* Satisfaction questionnaires, addressed to both the experts and the evaluated institutions, are regularly administered to assess the level of satisfaction with the Agency's management of evaluation activities. Recent examples include the initial accreditation of study programmes (since 2022-2023), the periodic accreditation of universities and AFAM institutions (since 2023), and the pilot procedure for the periodic accreditation of public AFAM institutions (2023). More focused feedback requests may be promoted on specific occasions, such as the pilot survey launched in 2020 to collect feedback from the rectors/delegates of the seven universities that underwent their periodic assessment visits online due to the pandemic, as well as from the chairpersons of the expert panels. Both groups of stakeholders provided valuable suggestions and considerations for incorporating online elements into the new periodic accreditation process. A survey addressed to students, professors and members of the university governance was also conducted during the pandemic to evaluate the distance-learning services provided by the universities.
6. *Collection of feedback from evaluation experts.* ANVUR expert evaluators provide valuable feedback on the occasion of training sessions and through their interaction with ANVUR staff during the performance of their evaluation activities.

As already mentioned, ANVUR's Advisory Board, including representatives of all the major national and international stakeholders, regularly interacts with ANVUR Governing Board, both because it is requested to provide preliminary opinions and suggestions on the procedures and documents produced by the Agency, and because the Advisory Board itself proactively seeks to engage with ANVUR on topics of general interest to the university system. Although Presidential Decree no. 76/2010 does not provide for the participation of representatives from the artistic and musical sector on the Advisory Board, the latter is consistently informed and involved in discussions about topics of particular relevance to the QA of AFAM institutions.

It is ANVUR's intention to systematize and further expand the many initiatives aimed at the collection of stakeholders' opinions. For example, regular collection of feedback from the evaluated institutions and expert panel members after the completion of the individual periodic evaluation procedures has been launched starting from the new AVA 3 cycle and will provide material for a thematic analysis.

The improvement of external communication, also thanks to the recent establishment of a new press office and the launch of a new website at the beginning of 2024, will also facilitate the collection of feedback from a broader range of external stakeholders and from civil society.

#### Supporting evidence

- The [Advisory Board Composition and Functioning Regulation](#) is published on the Agency's website.
- A list of active cooperations with international agencies and bodies working in the field of HE and research QA is available at this [link](#).
- For examples of internal documents and survey concerning stakeholder consultation see Annexes 08a-g.

## 8. Recommendations and main findings from previous review and Agency's resulting follow-up

The recommendations received by both the ENQA Board and the EQAR Register Committee have been addressed through several actions taken since 2019, and especially in the last three year, since the full renewal of ANVUR Governing Board.

While awaiting the issuance of the Presidential Decree that will regulate QA in the AFAM sector (which has been delayed due to frequent changes in government over the past five years), significant progress has been made by the Agency in developing a comprehensive QA framework that encompasses both private and public AFAM institutions, fully aligning with the ESG. This process involved active engagement from major national and international stakeholders. To foster the development of effective IQA activities, the role of AFAM Evaluation Boards has been significantly strengthened and enhanced. Collaborative discussions with the ministry have led to the identification of appropriate timelines to ensure the quality and meaningfulness of the Agency's activities.

Substantial work has been undertaken to align PhD accreditation procedures with the ESG. This includes the approval of a new *PhD Regulation* and the incorporation of a set of requirements for the periodic assessment of PhD programmes within the AVA 3 procedure. Further improvements will be implemented, such as the inclusion of peer review experts in the initial accreditation of new PhD programmes starting from the academic year 2024-2025.

Concrete measures have been implemented to foster participatory assessment. Students have been actively engaged as peer-review experts in all evaluation procedures for universities and AFAM institutions. Representatives of student organisations have also been consistently invited to participate in working groups and public consultations. In July 2023, an agreement has been signed with ESU to promote the involvement of foreign student experts in evaluation procedures, particularly for the initial and periodic assessment of Schools of Advanced Studies, which is conducted in English. ANVUR's Governing Board members and officers regularly contribute as speakers in events organised by AFAM student associations. Enhanced collaboration has also been established with other stakeholders, including the request of feedback on evaluation procedures. The newly appointed Advisory Board, established in 2020, is regularly consulted to provide input and recommendations on the evaluation standards and procedures adopted or updated by the Agency. The Governing Board members frequently attend Advisory Board meetings to present their respective areas of responsibility, seeking advice and suggestions.

Since the start of the new AVA 3 cycle in 2023, the expert reports are published in their entirety on the Agency's website, making them accessible to all stakeholders; the same is done for the panels' decisions concerning the initial accreditation of universities and the evaluation of new study programmes. The publication of reports is also being tested in the AFAM system, starting with the pilot procedure for the periodic assessment of public institutions, and will be officially implemented in the upcoming regulation.

A new complaint procedure was implemented since 2022, as a response to the recommendation made by EQAR.

Thematic analyses are now consistently made publicly available through their publication on ANVUR's website. Additionally, ANVUR organizes public presentations to disseminate the findings of these analyses. For example, the [Report on Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Disorders](#) was presented in June 2022 at the headquarters of the Rectors' Conference. Similarly, the latest [Report on the State of the Higher Education and Research System](#) was presented at the House of Deputies in June 2023.

Ongoing work concerns the better formalisation of the Agency's IQA processes, that are overall well organised but not yet clearly described in their internal relations, also on behalf of the stakeholders. The Governing Board is considering the possibility to appoint a group of external consultants to conduct a comprehensive mapping of the Agency's processes and provide suggestions to manage their improvement.

The recommendations received by both the ENQA Board and the EQAR Register Committee and the actions taken to answer them are presented below.

### ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

*Substantially compliant*

*It is recommended that ANVUR's Management Team explore ways enabling the increased strategic involvement of the Advisory Board. (EQAR also noted that ANVUR should provide a clear description and presentation of its activities on its website, separating activities that fall within and outside the scope of the ESG or within or outside its remit).*

The new Advisory Board, established in 2020, has engaged in intense and fruitful discussions with the Governing Board regarding the Agency's strategic orientations and priorities, the development of evaluation procedures and activities, the interaction with the international QA community, and the steps taken to address recommendations received from ENQA and EQAR. ANVUR's activities that are within and outside the scope of the ESG are listed on the Agency's [website](#). This distinction will be visually highlighted in the design of the new website, which is scheduled to be launched at the beginning of 2024.

*It is also recommended that the Agency plan a more systematic formal dialogue with specific stakeholders (students, professional organisations, social partners) to collect feedback that is actually of benefit to the Agency's governance and work.*

To enhance dialogue and collaboration with its stakeholders, the Agency has implemented several measures (see [par. 7](#)). Notably, a participatory approach has been adopted in significant instances such as the revision of the *PhD Regulation* (see [par. 6.2](#)), the update of procedures for the periodic accreditation of universities (AVA 3, see [par. 6.2](#)), the initiation of a pilot procedure for the periodic accreditation of public AFAM institutions (see [par. 6.2](#)), and the establishment of a new network of AFAM Evaluation Boards, parallel to the existing University Evaluation Boards.

### ESG 3.3 Independence

*Substantially compliant*

*It is recommended that ANVUR strive for greater autonomy in setting timetables and defining procedures more freely (particularly AFAM accreditations) for improving the quality and validity of external quality activities.*

Since 2019, ANVUR and the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) have established a structured dialogue aimed at enhancing the external accreditation procedures of AFAM Institutions and clarifying the roles of ANVUR and MUR. In 2022, modifications were made to the schedule of accreditation activities to ensure sufficient time for external evaluations.

### ESG 3.3

Substantially compliant

*It is recommended that ANVUR systematically publish any outcomes resulting from single working groups' activities performed by the Agency.*

The outcomes of the working groups appointed by ANVUR are now consistently published on the Agency's website. These results can be accessed through a dedicated webpage, ensuring transparency and easy availability of information.

Substantially compliant

*It is recommended that ANVUR establish priorities with regard to the development of meaningful processes and procedures, compatible with available resources.*

Since 2021, there has been a noteworthy enhancement in the planning of activities and prioritisation, attributed to an improved coordination between the **Triennial Activity Plan**, and the **Performance Plan** of the Agency (**PIAO**, starting from 2022). Each institutional objective is now meticulously linked with several operational objectives aligned with the three-year reference period. These targets undergo biannual monitoring and updates.

In terms of staffing, the ANVUR's workforce has experienced a growth of 25 units during the period 2020-2023, expanding from 35 units to 60 units (+71%). As of the time of this SAR's issuance, the active staff count stands at 39 units (out of which 5 are temporarily seconded to other administrations), while procedures are underway to achieve the complete augmentation of the workforce by 2024.

*Furthermore, it is recommended that the Agency reflect on possible changes to Agency's organisational structure, including an evaluation – in a medium to long term perspective – about the extent to which reserving a relatively large percentage of the budget to the full-time engagement of Governing Board members would still be considered an optimal use of resources.*

At the end of 2019, ANVUR initiated an internal evaluation of its organisational structure to enhance operational efficiency. The reorganisation was identified as a priority in the Agency's strategic plan for 2021-2023. The Director proposed the reorganisation plan, which was subsequently discussed and approved by the Governing Board in February 2022. The implementation of the approved plan should be completed by the end of 2023.

The engagement and responsibilities of the Governing Board are outlined in **Presidential Decree no. 76/2010**. Modifying the composition or functions of the Governing Board is not within the Agency's jurisdiction. It is important to note that the Governing Board plays a vital role in providing strategic guidance for the Agency's activities and ensuring coordination between the administrative structure and external stakeholders. The significance of this role was recently acknowledged by **Law no. 79/2022**, which extended the mandate of Board members from four to six years.



*It is recommended that the Agency enhances IT resources for using software applications and providing support to the Agency's activities.*

In late 2019, ANVUR joined CINECA, a non-profit Consortium consisting of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University and Research, 69 Italian universities, and 26 other national public institutions. CINECA is the largest computing centre in Italy and focuses on developing advanced information technology applications and services in the field of education and research.

To enhance the management of procedures for initial and periodic accreditation of universities and study programmes, ANVUR collaborated with CINECA to create a new online platform called AVA+. This platform is accessible to both expert panels and evaluated institutions. It aims to improve the efficiency and transparency of the accreditation process while facilitating simpler and more effective monitoring by ANVUR.

ANVUR collects indicators related to student careers, the outcomes of training activities, internationalisation, student satisfaction, employability, and the consistency of the teaching staff, and transmits them to universities with quarterly updates. ANVUR also provides universities with the opportunity to create their own customised indicators and benchmarks through a specially developed platform. A new platform is currently being developed to meet the requirements of the new periodic assessment procedure.

To address the complex nature of ANVUR's activities and projects, a migration of the Agency's database to the cloud was carried out in 2020, that resulted in improved IT security and enhanced management of data and resources.

In response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, ANVUR implemented the TEAMS platform, which is part of Microsoft Office 365 software. This platform facilitated the transition to remote mode for the visits to universities and AFAM institutions already planned for the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021. Additionally, it enabled remote work arrangements, commonly known as "smart working." Various initiatives were undertaken to enhance the Agency's IT resources, including the acquisition of new equipment, implementation of applications, and digital training for staff. These initiatives were subsequently formalised through a specific regulation (POLA - Piano organizzativo del lavoro agile).

### ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

### ESG 3.6

*Substantially compliant*

*It is recommended that ANVUR introduce a system aimed at formalising processes ensuring that external feedback is collected systematically and leads to continuous improvements within the Agency.*

The recent review of the AVA system and the development of experimental standards for the periodic assessment of AFAM institutions have involved extensive consultations, followed by feedback sessions with stakeholders regarding the implementation of observations and suggestions.

ANVUR has also progressively expanded the practice of collecting external feedback through dedicated questionnaires across its main evaluation procedures. These procedures include the initial accreditation of study programmes (since 2022), the new cycle of periodic assessment (AVA 3), the experimental periodic assessment of AFAM institutions, and the evaluation of research exercises (VQR).

During the pandemic, a questionnaire was administered to seven universities (three public and four private) that underwent their periodic assessment entirely online. Subsequently, focus meetings were conducted with representatives from both the universities and the evaluation panels. The feedback received offered valuable suggestions for the design of the new AVA 3 procedure, which incorporates a combination of in-person and remote assessment methods.

## Partially compliant

*It is recommended that ANVUR extend consideration of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG to all of the Agency's external QA activities falling within the scope of the ESG.*

*EQAR panel noted that ANVUR fully integrates Part 1 of the ESG in AVA procedures, but that AFAM and PhD accreditation procedures cover only some aspects of ESG 1.1-1.10.*

ANVUR responded to recommendations from ENQA and EQAR by proposing a new *PhD Regulation* to the Ministry, which was issued at the end of 2021. This updated *Regulation* explicitly incorporates references to the ESG (see par. 4.3.1). Additionally, ANVUR, in collaboration with a working group, developed operational *Guidelines* that were published by the Ministry in early 2023. As part of the new AVA 3 periodic assessment framework, ANVUR integrated a PhD assessment procedure that aligns with the ESG: this ensures that the evaluation of doctoral programmes adheres to international quality standards. Efforts to align QA procedures in AFAM institutions with the ESG have yielded significant progress. In particular:

1. **Ministerial Note no. 1071/2021**, par. 6, gave ANVUR the opportunity to introduce ESG standards in the periodic accreditation of AFAM institutions. Through the same note, following a proposal by ANVUR, the evaluation timeframe was significantly anticipated with respect to the beginning of the programmes. This aspect is aligned with ENQA's Board recommendation to strive for more autonomy in setting the timetable and therefore define the procedures more freely, aiming at improving the quality and meaningfulness of the external quality activities. ANVUR's competences were also better specified and distinguished from those of the Ministry
2. The new **Guidelines for the Accreditation of new AFAM Diploma Programmes**, approved in 2021, aim at aligning the standards for the initial accreditation of new programmes with the ESG. The most important innovation is the reinforced consideration of internal QA for the accreditation of new programmes. Particularly, the *Guidelines* specify that the external evaluation is based on the annual assessment carried out by the AFAM Evaluation Boards (see par. 4.3.2). To support ANVUR in this endeavour, an international Working Group on "Quality Assurance and Evaluation of AFAM Institutions" collaborated on the drafting of a proposal of **Standards and Guidelines for the Internal Assessment of AFAM Institutions**, that served as the foundation for the development of the experimental periodic assessment standards for public AFAM institutions (see par. 4.3.2)
3. New **Criteria and Guidelines for the Drafting of the Annual Report of AFAM Evaluation Boards** were produced by ANVUR in 2021 with the contribution of the above-mentioned international working group
4. The **Criteria and Guidelines for Selecting Members of the AFAM Evaluation Boards** were approved by the Governing Board in 2022
5. A specific Register of AFAM IQA experts was created. This Register can be used by AFAM institutions to select members of their Evaluation Boards, ensuring their qualification

*Substantially compliant*

***It is recommended that ANVUR continue efforts to ensure the formal and concrete systematic involvement of student organisations – and the student body in general – in the design and enhancement of its activities.***

University and AFAM students play an active role in the expert panels and working groups of ANVUR. They participate both individually and through their representative bodies, ensuring their valuable contributions. For example, students were involved in the AVA 3 working group and in the working group for the drafting of the new *PhD Guidelines*. Furthermore, a PhD student nominated by the European Students' Union (ESU) participated in the international working group on the QA of AFAM institutions.

**Presidential Decree no. 76/2010** stipulates that the Advisory Board includes student representatives, highlighting the importance of student involvement in ANVUR's decision-making processes.

ANVUR officers and members of the Governing Board are consistently invited to workshops and conferences organised by AFAM student organisations, fostering ongoing engagement and dialogue.

Moreover, ANVUR has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Students' Union (ESU). This agreement aims to facilitate the participation of student evaluators in ANVUR's activities, recognising the value of an international perspective in the evaluation processes.

These initiatives demonstrate ANVUR's commitment to involving students in various capacities and engaging with student organisations to ensure their voices are heard and taken into account in shaping higher education policies and QA procedures.

***Furthermore, it is recommended that the Agency further involve AFAM stakeholders in the design and continuous improvement of the Agency's external QA activities in the AFAM sector.***

ANVUR has established a productive dialogue with stakeholders in AFAM institutions, including student organisations. These stakeholders actively participate in discussions related to the development of new procedures and future activities for the evaluation of AFAM institutions. Their involvement ensures their valuable input in shaping the evaluation processes.

Student organisations have played an advisory role in the formulation of the guidelines for the accreditation of new programmes, encompassing both first- and second-cycle diplomas, which were approved in 2021; they also contributed to the establishment of the experimental **Standards for the Periodic Evaluation of Public AFAM Institutions**.

Since the establishment of the Network of AFAM Evaluation Boards in 2021, ANVUR has maintained a consistent and interactive relationship with its components. This collaboration facilitates continuous engagement and coordination in evaluating and ensuring the quality of AFAM institutions.

*Substantially compliant*

***It is recommended that ANVUR increase the usefulness of the AFAM accreditation system, implementing processes compatible with the AVA system and adapted to the AFAM institutional context.***

In accordance with the accreditation procedure for new university study programmes, the Guidelines for the accreditation of AFAM **first**- and **second**-cycle programmes, approved in 2020 specified that external evaluations would rely on the internal evaluation reports generated by the AFAM Evaluation Boards (see also 2.1). Both *Guidelines* also provided some optional suggestions about how to define a participatory process for the definition of new study programmes, in which students, as well as the AFAM Evaluation Boards, are more deeply and actively involved.

Since 2021, peer review expert panels, including student experts, similar to those utilised in university procedures (CEV AFAM), have replaced the previous single expert team composed of seven members, resulting in a more comprehensive and analytical assessment.

The design of the experimental periodic assessment procedure considered the need for compatibility between the standards and procedures applied to both universities and AFAM institutions. This approach ensures a coherent evaluation process while acknowledging the distinctive characteristics of AFAM programmes.

*Partially compliant*

***It is recommended that ANVUR involve student evaluators in all external quality assurance activities.***

*EQAR noted that if student evaluators have an equal role in panels there are no grounds for paying them less. EQAR further underlined that the lack of involvement of student experts in ANVUR's other activities is a matter of concern.*

Student evaluators actively participate in all ANVUR procedures, both for universities and the AFAM sector. They play a full role in the entire evaluation process, contributing to the formulation of the panel's judgment. The remuneration provided to student evaluators is aligned with that of other members and is not based on their role but rather on the specific activities they undertake during the evaluation.

## Partially compliant

*It is recommended that ANVUR publish full reports by the experts that are not only clear and accessible to the academic community, but also to external partners and other interested individuals.*

*EQAR underlined that, since the publication of summary reports in the case of AVA system evaluations, (...) ANVUR complies partially with the standard.*

ANVUR has made considerable strides in ensuring the availability of expert reports and evaluation outcomes on its official website. Starting from 2023, full publication of university periodic assessment reports commenced, coinciding with the beginning of the second round of the procedure (AVA 3). The publication of AFAM reports has also commenced, although complete implementation is pending the release of the AFAM QA regulation. Reports from pilot visits are already fully published.

## ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

## ESG 2.7

## Substantially compliant

*It is recommended that ANVUR make more transparent and accessible existing internal mechanisms, the actors involved and the detailed procedures of both complaints and appeals, respectively against procedural issues and all decisions.*

*EQAR underlined the lack of impartial processes for handling appeals, as the appeals are considered by the same body (the Governing Board) making all decisions relating to ANVUR's accreditation procedures. EQAR further noted the lack of a transparent and formal procedure to handle complaints.*

Considering recommendations from ENQA, EQAR, and suggestions received during the ENQA progress visit, in 2021 an independent Guarantee Committee was established, operating autonomously from the Governing Board (see par. 6.7). The Governing Board approved the Committee's duties and the procedures for handling complaints.

## 9. SWOT analysis

### Strengths

#### Strengths

1. Full and stable organisational, administrative and financial autonomy of the Agency, as mandated by law
2. Strong educational background and high professional qualification of ANVUR staff
3. Comprehensive QA framework for universities (AVA system), coherently linking internal and external QA
4. Robust reviewing processes
5. Quality and commitment of peer-review experts
6. Digital transformation and continuous development and improvement of ANVUR IT resources through cooperation with CINECA
7. Expertise in the production of indicators and analyses (both for higher education and research)
8. Quality of thematic analysis (the *Biennial Report on the State of the Italian Higher Education and Research System* was praised by the previous ENQA panel as the "only systemic and reliable statistical and analytical source of information in Italy on HE and research, under the full responsibility of ANVUR")
9. Consolidated experience in the evaluation of research and third mission

### Weaknesses

#### Weaknesses

1. Incompletely defined and formalised AFAM QA regulation
2. Substantially robust ANVUR's IQA but not completely formalised
3. Significant potential for improving the composition of the expert panels overcoming gender imbalance and difficulties in involving international experts
4. Management of evaluation procedures and drafting of evaluation documents not yet fully consolidated in the institutions
5. Weak communication policy (QA still perceived as a subject of interest for a selected few; outdated website, absence of a press office, absence on social network)
6. Staff significantly increased, but not yet fully adequate to handle the Agency's tasks

### Opportunities

#### Opportunities

1. Further increasing opportunities for fostering ANVUR presence in the international context through networking and projects
2. Significant growth in students' enrolment in the AFAM sector
3. Strong presence of Italian universities in the European Alliances initiatives, encouraging the development of appropriate QA activities, also based on specific protocols and conducted in English
4. Growing dialogue and engagement with stakeholders, including fruitful and timely exchange and cooperation with the Ministry to enhance the legislative framework
5. Increased involvement of individuals or entities external to the academic world in evaluation procedures
6. Investments of the national recovery and resilience plan (PNRR) in education, research, and digitalization

### Threats

#### Threats

1. Low participation of international experts
2. Perceived bureaucratic burden associated with evaluation procedures by the institutions
3. Legal barriers (including overregulation) that hinder the adaptation of the QA framework to evolving needs and requirements, with particular reference to international higher education and the AFAM sector
4. Legal limitations in terms of career progression of ANVUR officials and subsequent transitioning to other administrations
5. Unexpected and overwhelming tasks assigned by the Ministry, resulting in increased workload, disruption of the normal workflow, and lack of time to reflect on the Agency's future perspectives



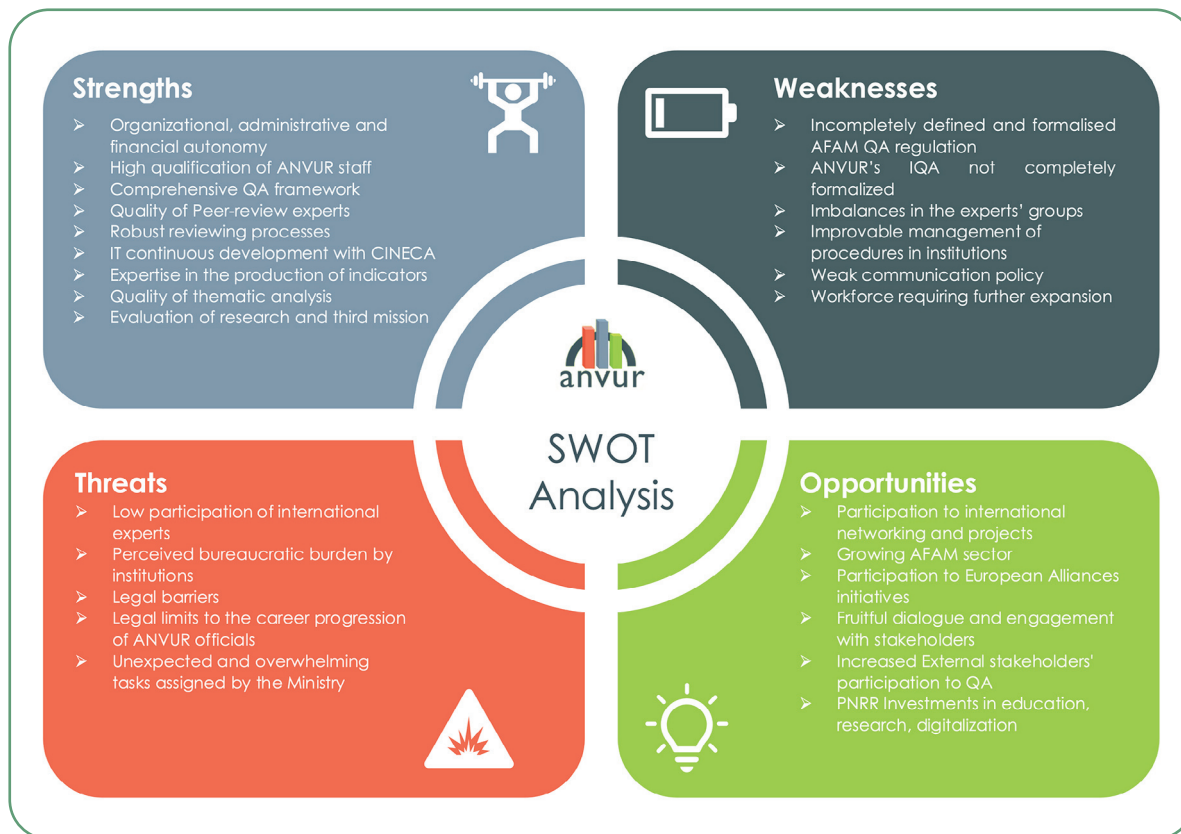


Figure 10 SWOT analysis

## 10. Key challenges and areas for future development

The higher education landscape is experiencing significant changes, driven by various challenges faced in recent years, such as financial crises, increasing globalisation, rapid advancements in information technologies, and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated existing trends, particularly in digital education, internationalisation of educational offerings, research, and third mission activities.

In response to these ongoing transformations, it is essential to develop a forward-looking vision and update and refine QA approaches and methodologies consequently. This should be done in collaboration with national stakeholders as well as considering the international context of higher education and QA. ANVUR will need to address several key challenges in the short and medium term, which can be structured around the following areas.

### Internationalisation

#### *1. Internationalisation of higher education*

Internationalisation is becoming increasingly important for HEIs. In the Italian context, it entails the development of various forms of international study offerings such as joint programmes, University Alliances, and cross-border higher education exchanges. It is crucial to establish a comprehensive strategy that facilitates cooperation with partner countries' HEIs while ensuring the maintenance of appropriate quality standards at the national level. ANVUR has initiated close collaboration with the Ministry of University and Research, the Rectors' Conference (CRUI), and the ENIC-NARIC Italian Academic Recognition Body (CIMEA). This collaboration aims to identify necessary legislative changes to enable the Agency's full operational capacity at the international level and to align with European accreditation criteria. Simultaneously, ANVUR actively participates in the international discourse on QA for joint programmes and Alliances. Currently, 50 Italian universities, accounting for half of the entire system, are involved in these initiatives. ANVUR collaborates through partnerships in ongoing projects and initiatives at the European level, such as the Erasmus+ project for the award of a European Label and the working group of the BFUG Thematic Peer Group C on QA, which addresses obstacles to implementing the Alliances initiative in different national contexts. Enhancing internal dialogue and fostering international cooperation on these matters are among the Agency's future priorities. In the coming years, attention to the topic of micro-credentials, already demonstrated by the Agency's participation in several national and European working groups, will continue with the aim of "criteria to ensure their recognition and quality at the international level.

### AFAM QA framework

#### *2. Completion of the AFAM QA framework*

In the Italian educational system, higher education in the arts, music, and dance holds a distinctive position. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of active institutions and students in this field. Additionally, it exhibits a strong international appeal, evident from the significant presence of foreign students in public and private conservatories, art schools, and design academies. During the past five years, ANVUR has actively engaged in constructive dialogue with stakeholders in the AFAM sector. The objective has been to foster a culture of quality, similar to that which has developed in the last ten years in the university system. ANVUR has also facilitated extensive interaction with the Ministry to gradually expand the scope of its external QA activities to encompass both public and private institutions, while promoting full compliance with the ESG. Due to the absence of a regulatory framework whose issuance depends on the Ministry's initiative, the establishment of a comprehensive QA system for the AFAM sector is an objective that has not been fully achieved yet. However, significant strides have been made by ANVUR towards the design of the overall architecture of such a system and there is a legitimate hope that the ongoing path may soon be completed.

### Improvement of evaluation procedures

#### *3. Continuous improvement of evaluation procedures and protocols*

Despite the improvements documented in the chapters of this SAR, ANVUR intends to continue in the future to ameliorate its evaluation activities, with the contribution of the Agency's stakeholders. The objective is to streamline the procedures, make them more effective, and further alleviate the perceived bureaucratic burden on institutions. Further investment will be put into the training of evaluation experts at all levels, the improvement of the structure and readability of evaluation

protocols, the simplification of IQA and EQA procedures. The participation of international experts, including students, in evaluation activities will be encouraged through the timely translation of documentation into English, facilitated by the new opportunities offered by AI tools.

#### 4. Digitalisation and modernisation of QA processes

The term “digitalisation” encompasses a wide range of digital technologies and rapidly evolving applications, including digital organisational tools (such as calendars, task management apps, videoconferencing systems, cloud services, and collaborative working platforms), database management systems, data analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI). While ANVUR had already gained some experience in utilising digital tools, the pandemic has significantly accelerated the digitalisation of the Agency's work practices, resulting in a notable impact on organisational processes. Digitisation has also been integrated further into the evaluation procedures, particularly concerning the hybrid conduct of periodic assessment visits (see [par. 4.3.1](#)). In the forthcoming years, ANVUR will not only evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented innovations but will also confront challenges associated with the proliferation of digital technologies. These challenges include the enhanced utilisation of data and indicators in evaluation procedures, as well as the application of AI techniques in the selection of peer experts and as an aid in evaluating research projects or outputs.

#### 5. Reform of research assessment

As one of the early signatories of the Agreement for the Reform of Research Assessment and a member of “CoARA – Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment,” ANVUR is actively engaged in the international discourse on the ongoing changes in research practices at both European and international levels. ANVUR recognizes the necessity for introducing changes in assessment practices for research, researchers, and research performing organisations to enhance the quality and impact of research. Consistent with previous choices made, such as assigning a significant role to peer review and promoting a responsible use of quantitative indicators in the last VQR exercise, ANVUR will collaborate with other Coalition members to implement the commitments outlined in the Agreement and adapt its evaluation procedures accordingly. The Agency will also contribute to discussions on emerging topics concerning research assessment, including academic integrity and the opportunities and risks associated with AI in research practices.

#### 6. Working efficiency and staff well-being

Due to the evolving higher education landscape and the increasing workload assigned to the Agency, it was recognised that the existing organisational structure was no longer suitable. Consequently, a reorganisation of the offices was proposed by the Director to the Governing Board. After thorough consideration of the proposal and consultation with ANVUR staff, the new organisational structure and allocation of responsibilities will come into effect by the end of 2023. As part of this reorganisation, recruitment for new positions assigned to ANVUR will take place between 2023 and 2024. This will allow for the strengthening of key areas such as AFAM or internationalisation, including the transformation of the internationalisation unit into a fully operational unit from its current project-based status. The planned changes aim to streamline the Agency's workflow, improve efficiency, and invest in prioritised areas in the short and medium term. Additionally, the reorganisation provides an opportunity to enhance internal expertise, as well as foster staff motivation and well-being.

#### 7. Cross-border QA activities

As ANVUR is not yet registered in EQAR, it is currently unable to conduct evaluations beyond the national scope. However, considering the increasing international openness of higher education within and beyond the European Higher Education Area, the Agency intends to explore the possibility of expanding its evaluation activities to foreign institutions and programmes in the future. This expansion would allow ANVUR to share its experience and contribute to the dissemination of shared principles and methodologies for ensuring the quality of higher education and research. Furthermore, ANVUR also envisions the potential for future development in assisting foreign countries in developing or improving their QA policies. This aligns with the Agency's perspective of contributing to the enhancement of QA practices on a broader international scale.

#### *8. Improvement of the Agency's communication strategy*

One of the prospective challenges involves improving the communication policy of the Agency. The evaluation documents, including standards, guidelines, and templates could benefit from a more consistent and standardised layout. The objective is to streamline and enhance their effectiveness by eliminating bureaucratic jargon, redundancies, and inconsistencies. It is essential to align the tools and documents used for different procedures, not only between the university and AFAM sectors but also within the same higher education sector. The goal is to provide experts, institutions, and the general public with clear and easily understandable information in plain language. Adopting a modern communication policy also entails utilising social media platforms effectively and timely to share information about the ANVUR's activities, actions, and decisions. This approach enhances the Agency's transparency with citizens and promotes a culture of quality in higher education. Additionally, a new bilingual website will be developed in 2024 to improve user-friendliness and responsiveness. The website will have clear navigation and visitor-centric, easy to read content. Special attention will be given to the English version of the website, ensuring that all relevant documents (many of which are already available in translation) are updated and available in an accessible format.

## Glossary of terms and acronyms

Term / acronym	English version/meaning
<b>Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei</b>	National Lincei Academy
<b>ACPUA – Agencia de Calidad y Prospectiva Universitaria de Aragón</b>	Aragon Agency for Quality Assurance and Strategic Foresight in Higher Education
<b>AEI – Agencia Estatal de Investigación</b>	(Spanish) State research agency
<b>AFAM – Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e coreutica</b>	Higher education in the Arts, Music and Dance
<b>AKOKVO – Agencija za kontrolu i obezbjeđenje kvaliteta visokog obrazovanja -</b>	ACQAHE- (Montenegrin) Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education
<b>ANECA – Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación</b>	Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation
<b>ANQA – ԱՆՔԱ</b>	Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
<b>ARACIS – Agenția Română de Asigura a Calității în Învățământul Superior</b>	Rumanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
<b>ASCAL – Agjencia e Sigurimit të Cilësisë në Arsimin e Lartë</b>	(Albanian) Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education
<b>ASN – Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale</b>	National Scientific Qualification to the position of university professor
<b>AVA – Autovalutazione, valutazione periodica, accreditamento</b>	Self-assessment, periodic assessment, accreditation
<b>AVEPRO – Agenzia della Santa Sede per la Valutazione e la Promozione della Qualità delle Università e Facoltà Ecclesiastiche</b>	Holy See Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties
<b>ANVUR – Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca</b>	National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes
<b>BFUG</b>	Bologna Follow-Up Group
<b>BFUG TPG C – QA</b>	Bologna Follow-up Group Thematic Peer Group on Quality Assurance
<b>CEV – Commissione di esperti della valutazione</b>	Evaluation Expert Commission
<b>CEV AFAM – Commissione di esperti della valutazione del settore AFAM</b>	AFAM Evaluation Expert Panel
<b>CFA – Credito Formativo Accademico</b>	Academic credit (for AFAM institutions)
<b>CFU – Credito Formativo Universitario</b>	University credit
<b>CINECA – Consorzio iNteruniversitario per il Calcolo Automatico</b>	Inter-university Consortium for Automatic Calculation
<b>CNAM – Consiglio Nazionale per l'alta formazione Artistica e Musicale</b>	National Council for Higher Education in the Arts and Music
<b>CNSU – Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari</b>	Italian National Council of University Students
<b>CNVSU – Comitato nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario</b>	National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (now ANVUR)
<b>CoARA</b>	Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment
<b>CODAU – Convegno dei Direttori generali delle Amministrazioni Universitarie</b>	Conference of University Administrative Directors
<b>CODIGER – Conferenza permanente dei Direttori Generali degli Enti pubblici di ricerca italiani</b>	Permanent Conference of General Directors of Italian Public Research Institutes
<b>Collegio dei revisori</b>	Board of Auditors

Term / acronym	English version/meaning
Comitato consultivo	Advisory Board
Comitato dei garanti del Codice etico	Board of guarantors of the Code of Ethics
Comitato di Garanzia	Guarantee Committee
Commissione Paritetica Docenti-Studenti – CPDS	Joint Teaching Staff – Student Committee
CONEAU – Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria	(Argentinian) National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation
Consiglio direttivo	Governing Board
Consiglio di Amministrazione - CdA	Administrative Council
CONPAQ – Coordinamento nazionale dei Presidi della Qualità di Ateneo	Coordination body of University Quality Committees
CONVUI – Coordinamento dei nuclei di valutazione delle università italiane	Coordination body of the University Evaluation Boards
CRUI – Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane	Conference of Italian University Rectors
CUG – Comitato Unico di Garanzia	Equal Opportunities Committee
CUN – Consiglio Universitario Nazionale	National University Council
Diploma accademico di I livello	Three-year academic diploma programme (AFAM)
Diploma accademico di II livello	Two-year academic diploma programme (AFAM)
DL – Decreto Legge	Law Decree
DLgs – Decreto Legislativo	Legislative Decree
DM – Decreto Ministeriale	Ministerial Decree
DPR – Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica	Presidential Decree
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQ-Arts	Enhancing Quality in the Arts
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ERIEC	European Research Infrastructure Evaluation Consortium
CIMEA – Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche	Centre for Information on Mobility and Academic Equivalences (Italian ENIC-NARIC academic recognition body)
ERC	European Research Council
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students Union
EUA	European University Association
EVALAG – Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg	Evaluation agency Baden-Württemberg
Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d	madri+d Knowledge Foundation
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HCERES – Haut Conseil de l'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur	High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
L – Laurea triennale	Bachelor's degree programme
LM – Laurea Magistrale	Master's degree programme



Term / acronym	English version/meaning
<b>LMCU – Laurea Magistrale a Ciclo Unico</b>	Single-cycle degree programme
<b>NDV – Nucleo di Valutazione</b>	University Evaluation Board / AFAM Evaluation Board
<b>MAB – Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság</b>	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
<b>MUR – Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca</b>	Italian Ministry of University and Research
<b>MusiQuE</b>	Music Quality Enhancement
<b>NVAO – Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie</b>	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
<b>OIV – Organismo indipendente di valutazione</b>	Independent Performance Assessment body
<b>PEV – Panel di Esperti della Valutazione</b>	Evaluation Expert Panel
<b>PIAO – Piano Integrato di Attività e Organizzazione</b>	Integrated Activities and Organisation Plan
<b>PQA – Presidio della Qualità di Ateneo</b>	University Quality Committee
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>QTI – Quadro dei Titoli Italiani</b>	Italian Qualifications Framework for Higher Education
<b>SAR</b>	Self-Assessment Report
<b>SAS – Scuola Superiore a Ordinamento Speciale</b>	School of Advanced Studies
<b>SMA – Scheda di Monitoraggio Annuale</b>	Annual Self-Assessment Programme Form
<b>DSA – Disturbi Specifici dell'Apprendimento</b>	Specific Learning Disorders
<b>SUA-CdS – Scheda Unica Annuale del Corso di Studi</b>	Annual Study Programme Form
<b>SUA-RD/Terza Missione – Scheda di monitoraggio annuale della ricerca e della terza missione</b>	SUA-RD/Third mission – Annual Monitoring Form for Research and third mission
<b>SUNEDU – Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior Universitaria</b>	Peruvian National Superintendency of University Education
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
<b>TECO – Test sulle Competenze</b>	TECO Competency Test
<b>TECO T – Test sulle competenze trasversali</b>	TECO Transversal Competencies Test
<b>TECO D – Test sulle competenze disciplinari</b>	TECO Disciplinary Competencies Test
<b>VQR – Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca</b>	Research Quality Evaluation
<b>WFME</b>	World Federation for Medical Education

## List of annexes\*

(\*the choice is limited to documents that are not available online; laws and ministerial decrees, expert reports, reports, guidelines, regulations and other strategical documents are published on ANVUR or institutional websites and linked in the text of the SAR)

### 1 – Initial accreditation (universities/study programmes/PhD)

- 01a.** Initial Accreditation – Ministerial Decree – UniCamillus [Ministerial Decree concerning the initial accreditation of a new University (UniCamillus)]
- 01b.** Initial Accreditation – GSSI [Initial accreditation report of a School for Advanced Studies (Gran Sasso Science Institute)]
- 01c.** Periodic Evaluation – Site Visit Agenda – Medicine [Site visit agenda for the initial accreditation of medical study programmes (Catania)]
- 01d.** Initial Accreditation – Form – Traditional Programme Siena (LM38) 2023 [Protocol for the initial accreditation of a traditional study programme (Siena, LM38, 2023)]
- 01e.** Initial Accreditation – Form – Online Programme UniMarconi (L1) [protocol for the initial accreditation of an online programme (UniMarconi, L1, 2023)]
- 01f.** Initial Accreditation – Ministerial Decree – Bologna Study Programmes 2023-2024 [Ministerial Decree concerning the initial accreditation of the study programmes proposed by the University of Bologna for the academic year 2023-24]
- 01g.** Initial Accreditation – PhD 2023-24 – GB Resolution [Governing Board resolution concerning the initial accreditation of PhD programmes for the academic year 2023-2024]

### 2 – Initial accreditation of AFAM institutions and study programmes

- 02a.** Initial Accreditation – AFAM Institutions – Art. 11 Raffles (11.07.23) [Assessment on the initial accreditation of a private AFAM Institution (Raffles), 2023]
- 02b.** Initial Accreditation – AFAM Study Programmes (27.07.23) [Governing Board decision on the initial accreditation of AFAM Study Programmes, 27th July 2023]

### 3 – Periodic assessment (universities and study programmes, including PhD programmes)

- 03a.** Periodic Assessment – Site Visit Agenda – Humanitas University [Site visit agenda for the periodic assessment of a university (Humanitas University), 2023]
- 03b.** Periodic Assessment – Form – Humanitas University [Form for the periodic assessment of Humanitas University – Institution]
- 03c.** Periodic Assessment – Department Form – Biomedical Sciences [Form for periodic assessment of Humanitas University – Department]
- 03d.** Periodic assessment – Form – Medicine and Surgery (LM-41) [Form for the periodic assessment of Humanitas University – Study programme]
- 03e.** Periodic Assessment – Form – Data Science in Medicine and Nutrition [Form for the periodic assessment of Humanitas University – Study programme]
- 03f.** Periodic Evaluation – Ministerial Decree – Milan [Ministerial Decree concerning the periodic assessment of the University of Milan, 2021]

### 4 – Periodic assessment of AFAM institutions

- 04a.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – CEV Form [Pilot Project protocol for the periodic assessment of AFAM Institutions]
- 04b.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – Site visit Agenda [Site visit agenda for the periodic assessment of ABA Roma]
- 04c.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – CEV Final Report [CEV Final Report for the periodic assessment of ABA Roma]
- 04d.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – ANVUR Report [ANVUR Report for the periodic assessment of ABA Roma]
- 04e.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – Site visit Agenda [Site visit agenda for the periodic assessment of Cons. Benevento]

**04f.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – CEV Final Report [CEV Final Report for the periodic assessment of Cons. Benevento]

**04g.** Periodic Assessment – Pilot Project – ANVUR Report [ANVUR Report for the periodic assessment of Cons. Benevento]

## **5 – Peer review experts**

**05a.** Peer Review Experts – Universities – Expert Training Programme [Training programme for University peer review experts]

**05b.** Peer Review Experts – AFAM – Expert Training Programme [Training programme for AFAM peer review experts]

**05c.** Peer Review Experts – AFAM – Event Calendar – Network of the AFAM Evaluation Boards [Calendar and contents of the meetings of the Network of the AFAM Evaluation Boards]

## **6 – Complaints and appeals**

**06a.** Complaints and Appeals – Guarantee Committee Decision (01/08/23) [Decision of the Guarantee Committee Decision on the request by Foggia University and Link Campus University]

**06b.** Complaints and Appeals – Request for Review by the MUR – Veterinary Medicine Tor Vergata [Request for Review by the MUR for the Veterinary Medicine programme, Tor Vergata University]

## **6 – Thematic analysis**

**07a.** Thematic Analysis – 2023 Report on the State of Higher Education and Research (Intro) [English version of the Introduction to the 2023 Report on the State of Higher Education and Research]

**07b.** Thematic Analysis – 2022 Disability Report (Intro) [English version of the Introduction to the 2022 Disability Report]

**07c.** Thematic Analysis – Teaching Competences Report (Intro): This document is the translated introduction to the Thematic Analysis Report concerning Teaching Competences

## **8 – Stakeholders**

**08a.** Stakeholder – Feedback on SAR Form [Form used for collecting feedback from the stakeholders on the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)]

**08b.** Stakeholder – Minister's Note on ANVUR Programme of Activities 2023-2025 [Note from the Minister of University and Research on ANVUR program of activities for the years 2023-2025]

**08c.** Stakeholder – Universities Expert Feedback Initial Accreditation Study Programmes 2022-2023 [Form used for collecting feedback from universities' experts on the initial accreditation of study programmes for the years 2022-2023]

**08d.** Stakeholder – AFAM Letter Return Standard Model AQ [Document on feedback given to the stakeholders' remarks on the model of Standards for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions]

**08e.** Stakeholder – AFAM Note Consultation Standards AQ [Request of feedback to AFAM stakeholders on the on the model of Standards for the periodic assessment of public AFAM institutions]

**08f.** Stakeholder – AFAM Expert Feedback Form Pilot Procedure [Form used for collecting feedback from AFAM's experts on Pilot procedure]

**08g.** Stakeholder – AFAM Institution Feedback Form Pilot Procedure [Form used for collecting feedback from evaluated Institutions on Pilot procedure]

