

Manual of ANVUR accreditation procedures

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1. Introduction

The “Manual of Accreditation Procedures by ANVUR” is a fundamental tool for ensuring transparency, clarity, and uniformity in applying evaluation and accreditation procedures for universities and AFAM institutions in Italy. This document systematically collects and describes the operational phases, evaluation criteria, and involved stakeholders, providing a detailed guide for institutions, evaluators, and all stakeholders.

Following the principles of the **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**, the manual serves as a reference to promote a culture of quality and transparency. The objective is also to consolidate, in a single document, the procedures described in various regulatory and guideline documents, highlighting the relationships between initial accreditation and periodic assessment procedures and their compliance with European standards.

2. Glossary of terms

The following are the technical terms and acronyms used in this *Manual*.

- **ANVUR:** National Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research.
- **AVA:** Acronym for the Self-assessment, periodic assessment, accreditation model for universities and study programmes. The current version is referred to as AVA 3.
- **CEV/PEV:** Evaluation Expert Commission/Panel appointed by ANVUR's Governing Board for specific accreditation procedures.
- **CNAM:** National Council for Higher Education in the arts and music.
- **CPDS:** Joint Teaching Staff – Student Committee.
- **CUN:** National University Council.
- **MUR:** Italian Ministry of University and Research.
- **NdV:** University Evaluation Board / AFAM Evaluation Board.

3. General structure of accreditation and assessment procedures

The accreditation and assessment procedures described in this *Manual* follow a common framework, although they differ in timing and implementation methods, as detailed in specific *Guidelines*. It is therefore useful to highlight the stages that are present in all ANVUR's evaluation procedures to facilitate their representation and understanding.

3.1. Common stages in the procedures

1. **Submission of the application:** the completed application, including all required documentation for evaluation, is sent to ANVUR by the institution or forwarded by MUR.
2. **Evaluation Expert Commission (CEV)/Panel (PEV):** the Governing Board of ANVUR appoints the Evaluation Experts Commission/Panel, selected based on the disciplinary area of evaluation and the specific expertise required from a registered pool of qualified experts defined by ANVUR through specific public selection processes. The CEV/PEV's task is to carry out the evaluation procedure of the application by applying the *Guidelines* and evaluation protocols approved by the Governing Board. The

composition of the CEV/PEV varies in terms of the number of members and required profiles, depending on the type of evaluation procedure, and is coordinated by a Chairperson/Coordinator responsible for task distribution, monitoring timelines, and overseeing the drafting of reports. The CEV/PEV always includes at least one student, selected from ANVUR's registered experts pool or the pool of student experts from the European Student Union, according to a procedure agreed upon through a formal agreement with ESU. The appointment of members is carried out in a way that avoids conflicts of interest or the incompatibility of the role (e.g., affiliation of the expert with the evaluated institution or institutions within the same region, membership in governance or quality assurance bodies of the evaluated institutions); rotation of names is also ensured to prevent the same experts from being assigned an excessive number of evaluations. The CEV/PEV is supported by ANVUR's managers and senior officials of organizational units who provide technical and organizational support, including documentation management and coordination of visits.

3. Document analysis and preliminary evaluation:

The document analysis and preliminary evaluation phase is structured as follows:

a) document analysis, in which the following steps are carried out:

- detailed examination of the documentation by each member of the CEV/PEV
- evaluation according to the protocol prepared by ANVUR

b) further investigations:

- decision on the need for an on-site visit/ specific in-depth investigations. For some procedures (e.g., the initial accreditation of Medicine and Surgery study programmes or periodic assessment of universities), an on-site visit is mandatory

c) preparation of the Preliminary Report with a collegial summary of the evaluations, and with collegial approval under the responsibility of the Chairperson. The report concludes with a judgment (positive/negative)

d) outcome:

- in the case of a positive judgment: transmission of the report to the Governing Board
- in the case of a negative judgment: transmission of the report to the institution for collecting any comments or counterarguments.

4. Counterarguments: In the event of a negative preliminary evaluation, the evaluated institution may submit its counterarguments within a timeframe that varies according to the specifics of the individual procedure.

5. Final evaluation: The CEV/PEV drafts the final evaluation report, which considers any counterarguments presented by the evaluated institution and is submitted to the attention of the Governing Board.

6. Governing Board's opinion: ANVUR's Governing Board expresses its opinion, considering the CEV/PEV report and the documentation produced by the institution. This opinion is also sent to the MUR and the evaluated institution and published on the ANVUR website.

7. **Review:** the MUR or the evaluated institution may request, once and for specific reasons, a review of the opinion issued by the Governing Board of ANVUR.
8. **Ministry's decision:** the MUR issues the accreditation or non-accreditation decree, in accordance with the opinion of the Governing Board of ANVUR.
9. **Publication of the evaluation:** ANVUR proceeds with the publication of the evaluation reports from the Commission and the final opinion of the Governing Board on the ANVUR website.
10. **Outcome and follow-up:** In the case of a positive evaluation by ANVUR, the Ministry adopts the accreditation decree. In the case of a negative evaluation, the Ministry adopts the non-accreditation decree or, in any case, closes the ongoing accreditation or assessment procedure. Even in cases of positive evaluation, conditions, or recommendations from ANVUR may be included, which will be subject to verification as outlined in the ANVUR opinion. During these verification processes, ANVUR also collaborates with the NdV of the institutions, which are tasked with providing feedback to the Agency on the actions taken by the institutions and with evaluating the quality of educational processes and research activities within institutions.

3.2. Involved actors and roles

- **Universities and AFAM Institutions:** Institutions are responsible for preparing all the documentation to be submitted to ANVUR for the initial or periodic evaluation of study programmes and branches.
- **ANVUR:** the public and independent Agency is tasked with designing and coordinating the evaluation process, as well as providing the final opinion on each accreditation or assessment procedure.
- **CEV/PEV:** the group of evaluation experts is assigned by ANVUR to manage the evaluation process.
- **NdV:** the Evaluation Board is the body of the evaluated institutions – mainly composed of external members – that works closely with ANVUR to verify the quality and effectiveness of the institution's activities.
- **CPDS:** it is a mixed committee composed of both teaching staff and students, established within university departments. Its responsibilities include monitoring the quality of educational offerings, teaching effectiveness, and student services provided by professors and researchers. Additionally, the committee identifies performance indicators to evaluate results and provides recommendations regarding the initiation or discontinuation of academic programmes.
- **Guarantee Committee:** This is the independent group of experts, selected by parties external to ANVUR, tasked with evaluating any complaint and requests for a review from institutions.
- **MUR:** is the authority responsible for issuing the accreditation or non-accreditation decree for the evaluated branches and/or study programmes.
- **CUN:** it is the advisory body of the MUR that provides opinions on the university study regulations and university teaching regulations.

- **CNAM:** it is the advisory body of the MUR that provides opinions on the teaching regulations of AFAM institutions and on the programming of the educational offerings in the artistic, musical, and choreographic sectors.

3.3. Evaluation criteria used by ANVUR

All ANVUR evaluation procedures involve the participation of external Evaluation Expert Commission/Panels (CEV/PEV) appointed by ANVUR's Governing Board, who are tasked with carrying out the evaluation by applying the protocols defined by the Agency. To carry out this activity, all experts are pre-trained through meetings with the members of ANVUR's Governing Board and the managerial staff and officials of ANVUR. The experts' work results in the preparation of specific Reports, which the Governing Board uses to form the final opinion, applying the following criteria: completeness of the experts' Report in relation to the aspects outlined in the evaluation protocol; adequate consideration of the documentation prepared by the evaluated institution; internal consistency of the Report; fairness of the judgment in relation to similar cases.

3.4. Review (complaints procedure)

The review of the opinion issued by ANVUR's Governing Board, which can be requested only once and within 10 days of receiving ANVUR's opinion, either by the Ministry or by the evaluated institutions, is aimed at:

- allowing the Ministry, if it identifies elements that could lead to a different evaluation than that of ANVUR, to request further investigation, which may potentially lead to a revision of the opinion.
- avoiding, when possible, resorting to administrative courts in cases where the evaluated institution (University or AFAM institution) identifies substantial issues in the methods and outcomes of ANVUR's evaluations.

The review request submitted by the MUR is examined directly by the Governing Board of ANVUR, which, based on the nature and complexity of the issue, may decide to proceed independently or to involve the Commission that conducted the initial evaluation, or alternatively, a new Commission specifically appointed. The new opinion of ANVUR's Governing Board must be issued within 30 days from the receipt of the review request from the MUR.

Requests for review submitted by institutions are submitted to the attention of a Guarantee Committee, composed of three external members, appropriately representing the evaluated entities.

The Guarantee Committee is composed of:

- One member, serving as Chairperson, appointed by the State Attorney.

For review requests related to universities:

- a university professor selected by the ANVUR Advisory Committee from a list of three nominees proposed by the CUN.
- a university student selected by the Advisory Committee from a list of three nominees proposed by the Italian National Council of University Students (CNSU).

For review requests related to AFAM institutions:

- an AFAM professor selected by the Advisory Committee from a list of three nominees proposed by the CNAM.
- an AFAM student selected by the Advisory Committee from a list of three nominees proposed by the CNAM.

Competence

The Guarantee Committee is responsible for ruling on review requests submitted by university and AFAM institutions regarding the decisions on initial accreditation and periodic assessment made by the ANVUR's Governing Board (also considering any counterarguments proposed by the involved institution) and forwarded to the MUR. In these circumstances, the institution concerned may request a review of the decision by submitting a motivated request, only once and within 10 days of receiving the final negative decision. The intervention of the Guarantee Committee is *exclusively* related to review requests concerning:

1. serious breaches in the procedure leading to the final assessment.
2. obvious inconsistencies or inconsistencies in the formulation of the final judgment compared to the counterarguments made by the Institution if they substantially affect the outcome of the assessment.
3. violations of the Agency's code of ethics.

Procedure

The Guarantee Committee conducts the inquiry related to the review request and communicates its reasoned decision to the Governing Board regarding the admissibility or rejection of the request. In case of *admissibility*, the Committee may propose:

1. the revision of the Governing Board's opinion, considering the elements that emerged from the analysis conducted by the Guarantee Committee itself.
2. the confirmation of the opinion previously issued.

Once the opinion of the Guarantee Committee is received, ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision, which is communicated to the concerned institution. The decision of ANVUR's Governing Board must be formulated within 45 days from the receipt of the review request.

The evaluated institutions retain the right to appeal the decision before the competent judicial authorities.

4. Accreditation and assessment procedures – UNIVERSITIES

Before describing in detail, the individual accreditation procedures for study programmes, Universities, Schools of Advanced Studies, and PhD programmes, it is useful to present an overview that illustrates how and in which procedures aspects related to the standards of the first part of the ESG 2015 are evaluated. This approach provides a coherent and integrated overview, linking each standard to the specific procedure in which it is considered, both in terms of initial design and practical application.

Table 1 – Evaluation and Accreditation with respect to the ESG 2015, Part I – Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	Universities/Schools of Advanced Studies		Study programmes		PhD programmes	
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment
<p>Policy for quality assurance (ESG 1.1) Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.</p>	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation
<p>Design and approval of programmes (ESG 1.2) Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of</p>		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	Universities/Schools of Advanced Studies		Study programmes		PhD programmes	
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment
the European Higher Education Area.						
Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3) Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation
Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4) Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g., student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation
Teaching staff (ESG 1.5) Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation
Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	Universities/Schools of Advanced Studies		Study programmes		PhD programmes	
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment
Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.		implemen tation		implemen tation		implemen tation
Information management (ESG 1.7) Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation
Public information (ESG 1.8) Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation
On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes (ESG 1.9) Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation		Assessed in terms of practical implemen tation

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	Universities/Schools of Advanced Studies		Study programmes		PhD programmes	
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment
programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.						
Cyclical external quality assurance (ESG 1.10) Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.		Yes, at least every 5 years		Yes, at least every 3 years		Yes, at least every 5 years

4.1. Initial accreditation of study programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of study programmes consists of the authorization issued by the MUR for the activation of a study programme in accordance with the opinion issued by ANVUR. In the case of a new study programme being established at a new decentralised branch of the university, the evaluation also extends to this new branch.

- **Evaluation elements:** The evaluation refers to the following aspects: a) presence of opinions from the NdV and the Regional Coordination Committee; b) quality of the training project; c) teaching requirements; d) student services; e) building and instrumental facilities available for the course. In the case of study courses in Medicine and Surgery, Dentistry and Dental Prosthetics, Veterinary Medicine, and health professions courses, the evaluation also concerns: f) the opinion of the Region; g) the reference health and care facilities (veterinary hospital in the case of Veterinary Medicine); h) the economic and financial sustainability plan (excluding health professions courses); i) the presence/forecast of a health-related Department to which the course refers. For new decentralized branches, the evaluation also considers a) financial sustainability; b) building structures and equipment available for student services; c) research activities; d) the quality assurance system.
- **Actors involved:** University, NdV, CPDS, PEV, ANVUR, CUN, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The University submits the application for the initial accreditation of the new study programme to the MUR through a dedicated online platform. Within 30 days of submission, the MUR forwards the application to the CUN and to ANVUR for evaluation within their respective areas of competence. The CUN is responsible for providing an opinion on the educational framework of the study programmes, while ANVUR is tasked with evaluating all other aspects.

The application includes an information dossier prepared in accordance with ANVUR's *Guidelines for quality design of newly established study programmes*. The

dossier contains details of the educational project, including learning objectives, the study plan, and the outcomes of consultations with stakeholders. It also includes opinions from the NdV and the Regional Coordination Committee, a description of orientation, tutoring, and placement services, a list of available facilities and equipment (classrooms, laboratories, libraries), and the composition of the teaching staff or a plan to meet the necessary requirements.

For healthcare-related programmes or new branches, the dossier also includes the documentation required to evaluate the additional criteria. Notably, starting from the a.y. 2025/26, for the initial accreditation of programmes awarding joint degrees with foreign universities, institutions can opt for evaluation based on the European approach by an international agency listed in the EQAR register. In this case, it is sufficient for the programme to have previously received a positive opinion from the CUN on the educational framework and a positive evaluation from ANVUR regarding teaching requirements.

2. Appointment of the Panel of Experts (PEV)

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints one or more PEV for the evaluation of new study programmes within the same disciplinary area (e.g., Medicine, Social Sciences, Humanities, etc.). Each PEV is composed of disciplinary experts and student experts, coordinated by a system expert or disciplinary expert who assumes the role of Chair of the PEV. If the group of study programmes assigned to a PEV includes at least one programme delivered entirely or predominantly online, the PEV is supplemented with at least one telematic expert. The number of PEVs appointed for each disciplinary area depends on the number of evaluated study programmes (on average, each PEV evaluates approximately 20 programmes). After its establishment, the PEV can see the documentation to begin the evaluation process.

3. Document analysis and preliminary evaluation

The PEV collegially evaluates each new programme by thoroughly reviewing the informational dossier submitted by the university and using the evaluation form adopted by the Agency. Based on the information in the dossier, the PEV may decide to arrange an on-site visit to further investigate specific aspects (e.g., verifying infrastructure and laboratories). The on-site visit is always mandatory for new programmes in the health sector, where the theoretical and practical activities of students in hospital settings are essential, as well as for programmes established by the university at new decentralized branches.

At the conclusion of the collegial evaluations, the Chair of the PEV prepares a summary report containing the findings of the analysis, the group's considerations, and conclusions. After approval by the group members, the Chair validates the report, which may conclude with a positive or negative judgment. In the case of a positive judgment, the report is sent directly to the Governing Board of ANVUR for the issuance of the opinion. In the case of a negative judgment, the report is initially sent to the university for any counterarguments.

4. Counterarguments

In the case of a negative preliminary evaluation, the University has 10 days to submit any observations and counterarguments, which will be brought to the attention of the PEV.

5. Final evaluation

The PEV, after examining the counterarguments, approves the final report, which is then transmitted to ANVUR's Governing Board.

6. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision based on the PEV's report and all available documentation for each programme.

The decision of the Governing Board results in a positive or negative opinion regarding accreditation, with the corresponding justifications. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the PEV's judgment about any aspects it considers having been inadequately addressed, to correct any inconsistencies, or to align and harmonize the evaluation with that of other programmes of a similar structure. Additionally, recommendations and suggestions may be included.

The opinion of the Governing Board is sent to the University and the MUR, along with the PEV's report.

Both the MUR and the proposing institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

7. Publication of the evaluation

ANVUR, after 10 days from the deadline within which the Ministry and the University can request a review of the evaluation, publishes the PEV's final report and the opinion of ANVUR's Governing Board (in cases of negative evaluation or of positive evaluation including the formulation of specific conditions and/or recommendations) on its website.

8. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with the opinion of ANVUR, the Ministry adopts the formal decision of accreditation or non-accreditation of the study programme and transmits it to the university.

- **Duration of the process:** The MUR forwards accreditation applications to ANVUR within 30 days of their submission; ANVUR issues a reasoned opinion within 120 days from the date of receipt of the application.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 1. In the case of a positive evaluation outcome, the MUR adopts the accreditation decree for the programme, which must be activated within the next two academic years. Even in the case of a positive opinion, ANVUR may issue recommendations on specific aspects, which the university must address within the timeframe set by ANVUR. These aspects will then be subject to verification during the programme's monitoring phase, in collaboration with the university's Evaluation Unit, which is required to report on the implementation of ANVUR's recommendations in its annual report.
 2. In the case of a negative evaluation outcome, the MUR adopts the non-accreditation decree for the programme, which can be resubmitted for accreditation in the following academic year.

4.2. Periodic assessment of study programmes (see also 4.4)

Description: The periodic assessment of study programmes consists of verifying the continued compliance with the requirements that led to the initial accreditation, as well as the possession of additional quality requirements defined by the AVA system. Study programmes are subject to periodic assessment with a frequency of at least every three years.

During the periodic assessment procedure of universities – described in section 4.4 – a representative sample of study programmes is selected, ranging from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 15 programmes, depending on the size of the University in terms of the number of already active programs programmes.

The study programmes that are not selected for the periodic assessment visit are subjected to an annual verification of the compliance with teaching requirements or the status of the implementation of their respective achievement plan.

Additionally:

- the NdV conducts an annual monitoring of the performance of active study programmes and organizes hearings with those programmes that exhibit critical issues in their educational trends. This monitoring is based on a set of indicators defined by ANVUR, with the aim of assessing the status of their internal quality assurance system and highlighting any concerns in the Annual Report sent to the MUR and ANVUR.
- each study programme is tasked with annually completing an Annual Monitoring Report (SMA). This report involves analyzing the performance of a set of quantitative indicators related to the programme and defining any necessary improvement actions. All SMAs are systematically reviewed by the Joint Student-Teacher Committees, which produce summary reports that are used by the NdV to identify the programmes to be subject to a hearing and to draft its annual report.

ANVUR uses the analysis of the annual reports from the Evaluation Boards and the content of the Monitoring Sheets (SMA) to select the study programmes that form the sample to be analyzed during the university's periodic assessment visit. The periodic assessment of study programmes can also be brought forward in the event of identified issues, including those reported by the Evaluation Boards or the Ministry.

- **Evaluation elements:** In addition to verifying the maintenance of the requirements that led to the initial accreditation, the following aspects are specifically evaluated: a) quality assurance in the design and delivery of the programme; b) management of human resources and facilities; c) procedures for monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes.
- **Actors involved:** University, NdV, CEV, ANVUR, and MUR
- **Staes of the procedure** (for each of the phases described below, reference can be made to what is outlined for the periodic assessment process of universities).

1. Selection of the study programmes to be evaluated

As part of the periodic assessment process for universities, ANVUR's Governing Board selects a suitably representative subset of study programmes, with the number (ranging from 4 to 15) varying depending on the size of the university in terms of existing programmes. The selection is communicated to the university at least 5 months before the visit; this allows the university sufficient time to prepare a detailed Self-Assessment Report (see section 4).

2. Appointment of the CEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints a CEV responsible for the periodic assessment of the University (see procedure 4) and its study programmes. The CEV also includes several disciplinary experts equal to the number of programmes selected for the assessment visit, as well as a number of student experts equal to the disciplinary areas being evaluated. The disciplinary experts and student experts are tasked with evaluating the study programmes. The names of the commission members are communicated to the university at least 12 weeks before the visit, to check for any potential conflicts of interest and to implement any necessary substitutions.

3. Self-Assessment Report

The university prepares a Self-Assessment Report to be submitted to the Agency at least 8 weeks before the visit, which also includes an analysis of the selected study programmes, conducted based on the areas of focus defined in the AVA model and supported by relevant documentation. The self-assessment must also consider the outcomes of the first cycle of periodic assessment, the evolution of the QA system over time, the results achieved, and must refer to the relevant documentary sources that provide adequate evidence of the claims made. The Report and all necessary documents for the evaluation are uploaded by the university to the online platform dedicated to the procedure.

4. Document analysis

The document analysis phase described for the periodic assessment of universities also includes a detailed analysis of the documentation submitted by the university for each of the selected study programmes, conducted by the disciplinary experts and student experts, with the coordination of system experts. During this phase, the Self-Assessment Report prepared for each of the selected study programmes and the documentary sources provided by the university are analysed, identifying the aspects to be further explored during the visit.

5. Institutional visit

During the institutional visit dedicated to the periodic assessment of universities, visits are also conducted for the selected study programmes. The visits related to the study programmes and PhD programmes are conducted remotely. The exceptions are the on-site visit to the facilities hosting the study programmes, and the on-site visit to the Medicine and Surgery programmes, for which, due to the importance of the healthcare infrastructures for student training, an in-person visit is required. An on-site visit is also conducted for the selected departments.

The institutional visit is a key moment in the evaluation process, allowing the CEV to directly engage with the representatives of the study programmes (e.g., programme coordinator, the CPDS, some of the reference teachers, a student representative, the programme review group, stakeholders, etc.). The goal is to gather useful information, perceptions, and viewpoints from the various categories of stakeholders, to deepen and verify what is stated in the provided documents, identifying any organizational and management issues. The remote visit of the study and doctoral programmes takes place online on a platform set up by ANVUR and occurs about two weeks before the on-site visit. The visit program is defined by the CEV and shared with the university, which can propose modifications for CEV approval.

6. Preliminary evaluation

The CEV, within 60 days of the end of the institutional visit, collegially prepares the Preliminary Report. The Preliminary Report prepared by the CEV includes detailed evaluation sheets related to the areas of focus for each of the selected study programmes, which provide an evidence-based analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the document analysis and confirmed during the institutional visit.

The report is sent to the AVA Organizational Unit of ANVUR, which verifies its contents, integrates it with the evaluation of the quantitative indicators provided by the AVA model for each of the selected programmes, and sends it to the university within 30 days.

7. Counterarguments

Once the university receives the Preliminary Report, it has 30 days to submit any counterarguments, which must include references to specific factual elements aimed at responding to what is reported in the evaluation sheets of the study programmes, with reference to the university's documentation submitted for the document analysis and/or the findings from the institutional visit.

8. Final evaluation

The CEV, after examining any counterarguments, integrates the Evaluation Sheets of each study programme with its own considerations within 30 days and drafts the Final Report, which is approved collegially. The final evaluation is then transmitted to the ANVUR Governing Board.

9. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board, within 30 days of receiving the final report from the CEV, prepares a Periodic Assessment Report, in which, in addition to issuing its judgment on the periodic assessment of the institution, it also expresses its judgment on the selected study programmes. The judgment may differ from that of the CEV regarding any aspects that the Governing Board considers having been inadequately addressed, in order to correct any inconsistencies or align the evaluation with that of other programmes of a similar structure, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

The judgment of periodic assessment is graded into four levels:

- fully satisfactory (duration of 3 years)
- satisfactory (duration of 3 years)
- Partially satisfactory (duration of less than 3 years, depending on the identified issues)
- Not satisfactory (negative outcome), which results in the closure of the study programme.

The evaluation sheets of the study programmes are an integral part of the overall Periodic Assessment Report of the university, which is sent to the MUR and the university.

Both the MUR and the proposing institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4. section.

10. Publication of the evaluation

ANVUR, after 10 days from the deadline within which the Ministry and the University can request a review of the evaluation, publishes the final report of the CEV and the Periodic Assessment Report on its official website.

11. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with the opinion of ANVUR, the Ministry proceeds with the adoption of the formal decision of periodic assessment or non-accreditation (which results in the closure of the study programme).

- **Duration of the process:** It coincides with the duration of the university's periodic assessment process. Between the moment of selecting the programmes to be evaluated and the conclusion of the evaluation with the transmission of the final report to the university, a maximum of 330 days may pass. The transmission of the final report to the university occurs within 180 days from the date of conclusion of the institutional visit.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 - a) In the case of a "fully satisfactory" or "satisfactory" judgment, the assessment of the programme is valid for 3 years. The evaluation report may include specific recommendations or conditions and a deadline within which ANVUR, also relying on the university's NdV, verifies the actions taken for the specific programme, to extend or not extend the accreditation period of the programme, aligning it with that of the university.
 - b) In the case of a "Partially satisfactory" judgment, the assessment period is shorter, depending on the type of issues identified (generally 18 months). At the end of this period, a verification is conducted of the actions taken by the university for the specific study programme, to decide whether to extend the accreditation period to 3 years.
 - c) In the case of a "Not satisfactory" judgment, equivalent to non-accreditation, the outcome is the closure of the programme. In this case, ANVUR proposes to the Ministry the revocation of accreditation, with the consequence that no further cohorts of students can be enrolled, but those already enrolled will be allowed to complete their studies.

For other study programmes at the university that were not subject to an on-site visit, in addition to the annual monitoring activity carried out by ANVUR in collaboration with the university's Evaluation Boards, the accreditation is assigned that is linked to that of the university (see procedure 3.4). These programmes therefore receive assessment for 3 years if the university's assessment judgment was "fully satisfactory" or "satisfactory." The assessment is reduced to 1 or 2 years if the university's accreditation judgment resulted in a "conditional" outcome.

4.3. Initial accreditation of new universities and their proposed study programmes

Description: Initial accreditation consists of the authorization granted by the MUR for the establishment of a new university and its related study programmes, following an evaluation and in accordance with the opinion of ANVUR. The possibility of submitting applications can only be provided by law or by the guidelines for the university system, adopted every three years by the Ministry. The evaluation under ANVUR's competence is activated after the MUR verifies the admissibility of the applications and through an evaluation procedure conducted by ANVUR, which includes a phase of document analysis followed by a possible on-site visit.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation refers to the location and the study programmes proposed for activation. Regarding the location, the following aspects are evaluated: a) transparency requirements (all necessary information to clarify the structure and characteristics of the university); b) multi-year research activities carried out by the promoting entity; c) type of educational offer proposed, which must include bachelor's and master's degree programmes and must refer to different study classes compared to those active in nearby universities; d) financial, logistical, and scientific sustainability of the educational and development project of the university; e) presence of an internal quality assurance system. As for the study programmes, the evaluation is like that carried out for the initial accreditation of study programmes proposed by already accredited universities. The procedure is divided into two phases: the first involves the evaluation of the application based on the documentation produced by the promoting entity; if this phase is successfully passed, the next phase involves an on-site visit to the university's facilities.
- **Actors involved:** Promoting entity, CEV, ANVUR, CUN, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The entity that promotes the establishment of a new university submits the application and all required documentation to the MUR through an online platform. After conducting the preliminary eligibility check, the Ministry informs ANVUR of the possibility to access the application and the entire documentation dossier to begin the evaluation phase. The CUN is responsible for expressing an opinion on the educational structure of the study programmes, while ANVUR is responsible for evaluating all other aspects.

2. Appointment of the CEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints a CEV tasked with evaluating the application. The number of members of the Commission varies depending on the type and number of study programmes proposed by the new university. The Commission includes, in addition to the Chair, system experts, disciplinary experts, an expert on economic-financial sustainability, and a student expert.

3. Document analysis and preliminary evaluation

The Commission proceeds with the evaluation of the application, examining the dossier produced by the promoting entity. The documentation is analytically evaluated by individual members of the CEV and is then subjected to collegial evaluation. Specifically, the system experts, the economic-financial sustainability expert, and the student expert draft the evaluation protocol for the institution, addressing transparency requirements, the verification of economic-financial sustainability, logistical sustainability, scientific sustainability, and the presence of an adequate internal quality assurance system. The disciplinary experts, on the other hand, draft the evaluation protocol for each study programme.

At the end of the evaluations, the CEV collegially approves the Preliminary Report, which concludes with a positive or negative judgment. In both cases, the Report is sent to the Governing Board of ANVUR.

4. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board analyzes the CEV's report and the documentation dossier from the promoting entity and drafts its own opinion, which may differ, with specific justifications, from the opinion issued by the CEV.

In the case of a negative opinion, the entire documentation (CEV's report and ANVUR's opinion) is sent to the MUR. It is the responsibility of the MUR to manage any counterarguments phase with the promoting entity.

In the case of a positive opinion, ANVUR informs the MUR and instructs the CEV to proceed with the second phase of the evaluation, scheduling the on-site visit (see point 8).

5. Counterarguments

The promoting entity, within 10 days of receiving the negative preliminary report adopted by ANVUR from the MUR, may submit its counterarguments, which are sent to the MUR and forwarded to ANVUR for the relevant evaluations.

6. Transmission of Counterarguments to the CEV and Related Evaluation

ANVUR transmits the counterarguments to the CEV, which takes them into account for the possible modification of the preliminary final report. The report is collegially approved by the CEV and sent to the Governing Board of ANVUR.

7. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board analyzes the CEV's report, and the counterarguments submitted by the promoting entity and drafts its own opinion, which may differ, with specific justifications, from the one issued by the CEV.

In the case of a final negative opinion, the entire documentation (CEV's report and ANVUR's opinion) is sent to the MUR, and the application is considered rejected without proceeding with the on-site visit. The MUR will then manage the communication with the promoting entity.

In the case of a positive opinion, ANVUR informs the MUR and instructs the CEV to proceed with the second phase of the evaluation, scheduling the on-site visit (see point 8).

Both the MUR and the promoting entity may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

8. On-site visit

The CEV, with the organizational support of ANVUR's staff, contacts the promoting entity to organize the on-site visit. During the visit, the logistical, financial, and scientific sustainability requirements of the proposal are further explored and verified. The on-site visit includes meetings between the delegation designated by the promoting entity and the entire CEV.

9. Evaluation after the on-site visit

The CEV, based on the evidence gathered during the on-site visit, collegially evaluates the proposal, integrating it with the visit Report. The visit Report may either confirm the positive evaluation made during the document analysis or lead to a revision of that evaluation, providing evidence of aspects observed during the on-site visit that led to a different judgment.

The Report is collegially approved by the CEV and sent to the Governing Board of ANVUR.

10. Opinion of the Governing Board

The Governing Board analyses the visit report and drafts its own opinion, which may differ, with specific justifications, from the opinion issued by the CEV. ANVUR's opinion is sent to the MUR along with the CEV's Report.

In the case of a negative opinion from ANVUR, the MUR will manage the procedure for collecting any counterarguments with the promoting entity.

In the case of a positive opinion from ANVUR, it is sent to the MUR along with the CEV's Report to proceed with the adoption of the decree for the establishment and initial accreditation of the new university (see point 14).

It is important to note that if the MUR identifies issues with ANVUR's evaluation, it may, once only, request ANVUR to re-evaluate the application.

11. Counterarguments

In the event of a negative opinion adopted by ANVUR, the proposing entity has 10 days from the receipt by the MUR of the CEV report and the negative opinion adopted by ANVUR to formulate its counterarguments, which are sent to the MUR and forwarded to ANVUR for the relevant evaluations.

12. Transmission of counterarguments to the CEV and final evaluation

ANVUR transmits the counterarguments to the CEV, which takes them into account when drafting the Final Report, either fully accepting them, partially accepting them, or considering them unsatisfactory. The Final Report is collegially approved by the CEV and sent to ANVUR's Governing Board. The counterarguments are not transmitted to the CEV if the negative opinion of the Governing Board, as described in point 10, differs from the positive opinion issued by the CEV. In this case, the final opinion process, as described in point 13, is immediately initiated.

13. Final opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board analyses the CEV's Final Report, and the counterarguments submitted by the promoting entity and drafts its own opinion. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment regarding any aspects it considers having been inadequately addressed, to correct any inconsistencies, or to align the evaluation with that of similar situations already evaluated, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

ANVUR's opinion is sent to the MUR, along with the CEV's report.

Both the MUR and the promoting entity may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

14. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with ANVUR's opinion, the Ministry proceeds with the adoption of the formal decision for the initial accreditation or non-accreditation of the new university.

15. Publication of the evaluation

At the same time as the adoption of the MUR's decision, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and its own opinion on the official website.

- **Duration of the process:** a maximum of 120 days between the date of receipt of the application and documentation by the MUR and the issuance of the Agency's opinion.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 1. In the case of a positive evaluation by ANVUR, the MUR adopts the decree for the accreditation and establishment of the new university and its related study programmes.
 2. in the case of a negative evaluation by ANVUR, the MUR denies the accreditation and establishment of the new university.

4.4. Periodic assessment of universities (see also 4.2)

Description: The periodic assessment of universities has a maximum duration of five years and consists of a comprehensive evaluation of the university, a representative number of departments, study programmes, and PhD programmes. The evaluation model used by ANVUR is called AVA.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) the strategy, planning, and organization of the university; b) resource management; c) quality assurance; d) the quality of teaching and student services; and e) the quality of research and the third mission/social impact.
- **Actors involved:** University, NdV, CEV, ANVUR, and MUR
- **Stages of the procedure:**

1. Selection of the departments and study programmes to be evaluated

In addition to evaluating the university, ANVUR's Governing Board selects a subset of departments (between 1 and 5), study programmes (between 4 and 15), and doctoral programmes (between 1 and 5) to be evaluated as part of the periodic assessment procedure. The size of each subset depends on the size of the university. The selected departments, study programmes, and doctoral programmes must ensure adequate representativeness of all disciplinary areas. The selection is communicated to the university at least 5 months before the visit, allowing the university sufficient time to prepare a detailed Self-Assessment Report (see point 3).

2. Appointment of the Evaluation Expert Commission (CEV)

The Governing Board of ANVUR appoints an Evaluation Commission (CEV). The number of members of the Commission varies depending on the number of departments, study programmes, and doctoral programmes to be evaluated. The Commission includes, in addition to the Chair, a Coordinator who also serves as the secretary, system experts, disciplinary experts, student experts, and an expert in economic-financial sustainability. The names of the commission members are communicated to the university at least 12 weeks before the visit, to check for any potential conflicts of interest and to implement any necessary substitutions. An ANVUR official is also designated to provide support with the logistical and organizational aspects of the CEV's activities.

3. Self-Assessment Report

The university prepares a Self-Assessment Report to be submitted to the Agency at least 8 weeks before the institutional visit. In the Report, the university provides a

structured presentation of all the necessary information to evaluate its academic and organizational quality, offering self-assessment judgments for each area of focus in the AVA model. The Report must also include a detailed description of the processes implemented and the results achieved, highlighting the methods adopted and the strategies followed by the university. The self-assessment must also consider the outcomes of the first cycle of periodic assessment, the evolution of the internal QA system over time, the results achieved, and must refer to the relevant documentary sources that provide adequate evidence of the claims made. The Report and all necessary documents for the evaluation are uploaded by the university to the online platform dedicated to the procedure.

4. Document analysis

In this phase, the CEV analyses the Self-Assessment Report and the documentary sources provided by the university, identifying the aspects to be further explored during the visit and the program for the visit itself. The document analysis is a central moment of the evaluation process and follows the guidelines defined by ANVUR to ensure a structured and transparent approach. This activity involves the entire CEV, with members dividing tasks based on their expertise.

Each expert has clear roles: disciplinary experts, together with student experts, are responsible for examining the study programmes in detail, while system experts and the economic-financial sustainability expert focus on the organizational and structural requirements of the university. The evaluations are recorded on specific forms within the online platform, which contain preliminary judgments on the areas of focus and identify the areas to be explored in the subsequent institutional visit.

The Chair and the Coordinator manage the work of the CEV, develop a detailed visit programme, and organize online meetings to discuss the analyses and, if necessary, request clarifications from the university. Based on the program, the visit diaries and necessary documentation are prepared to guide the on-site evaluations.

5. Institutional visit

The institutional visit is a key moment in the evaluation process, allowing the CEV to engage directly with the various components of the university. The goal is to gather useful information, perceptions, and viewpoints from different categories of stakeholders to deepen and verify what has been stated in the provided documents, identifying any organizational and management issues.

The visit is divided into two distinct phases: the remote visit and the on-site visit.

Remote visit: This phase concerns study programmes and PhD programmes and is conducted via an online platform provided by ANVUR. This phase, which takes place approximately two weeks before the on-site visit, aims to evaluate aspects not directly related to the physical infrastructure and facilities.

On-site visit: This phase is dedicated to verifying the university's internal quality assurance system and evaluating the university's physical infrastructure, departments, and selected study programmes. During the on-site visit, the Medicine and Surgery programmes are always evaluated, as they have specific requirements in terms of services and facilities necessary for student training, including in the healthcare sector. This phase allows for a direct observation of educational spaces, laboratories, libraries, support services, and available technological infrastructure, as well as an opportunity

to address any issues that emerged during the remote visit. The program includes meetings with university representatives, including the governance bodies, the Quality Office, the NdV, student representatives, department representatives, and key administrative service managers. The duration of the visit varies from 3 to 5 days, depending on the size and organizational complexity of the university.

The whole CEV participates in the visit (Chair and Coordinator of the CEV, system experts, the economic-financial sustainability expert, student experts, and, if necessary, telematic experts). At the end of each day of the visit, the CEV meets to share and align the evaluations. The visit concludes with a meeting between the CEV, the Rector, and a delegation of representatives from the various components of the university. In this meeting, the Chair of the CEV presents a brief overview of the main strengths and areas for improvement identified, providing a framework for initiating any corrective actions.

6. Preliminary evaluation

The CEV, within 60 days of the conclusion of the institutional visit, collegially prepares the Preliminary Report. The report consists of the evaluation sheets completed by the CEV, referring to the institution, study programmes, PhD programmes, and departments that were visited. The report includes a structured analysis based on evidence of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the document analysis and confirmed during the institutional visit, with reference to each area of focus in the AVA model.

The Preliminary Report is sent to the AVA Organizational Unit of ANVUR, which verifies its content, integrates it with the evaluation of the quantitative indicators provided by the AVA model for each area of focus, and sends it to the university within 30 days.

7. Counterarguments

Once the university receives the Preliminary Report, it has 30 days to submit any counterarguments, which must include references to specific factual elements aimed at responding to what is reported in the evaluation sheets, with reference to the university's documentation submitted and/or the findings from the institutional visit.

8. Final evaluation

The CEV, after considering any counterarguments from the university, within 30 days updates the evaluation sheets with its own assessments and prepares the Final Report, which is collegially approved. The final report is then sent to the Governing Board.

9. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board, within 30 days of receiving the CEV's Final Report, prepares a Periodic Assessment Report, in which it expresses its judgment regarding the periodic assessment of the institution and its study programmes. The judgment may differ from that of the CEV regarding any aspects the Governing Board deems to have been inadequately considered, to address any inconsistencies or align the evaluation with similar situations previously evaluated, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

The periodic assessment judgment is graded into 4 levels:

- fully satisfactory (duration of 5 years)
- satisfactory (duration of 5 years)

- Partially satisfactory (duration of 1 or 2 years, before a new evaluation takes place)
- Not satisfactory (negative outcome), which results in the closure of the university.

The ANVUR Report, accompanied by the proposal and the assessment judgment, is sent to the MUR and the university.

Both the MUR and the university may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

10. Publication of the evaluation

Ten days after the deadline within which the Ministry and the university can request a review of the evaluation, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and its own Periodic Assessment Report on its official website.

11. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with ANVUR's opinion, the Ministry adopts the formal decision of periodic assessment or non-accreditation (which results in the closure of the institution).

- **Duration of the process:** Between the moment of selecting the departments, study programmes, and doctoral programmes to be evaluated and the conclusion of the evaluation with the transmission of the final report to the university, a maximum of 330 days may pass. The transmission of the final report to the university occurs within 180 days from the date of conclusion of the institutional visit.
- **Outcome and follow-up:** Periodic assessment concerns both the institution and the study programmes. For the study programmes, reference is made to the specific procedure (see section 4.2). As for the institution itself:
 - a) in the case of a "fully satisfactory" or "satisfactory" judgment, the assessment period lasts for 5 years. The evaluation report and ANVUR's report may include specific recommendations or conditions, as well as a deadline by which ANVUR, also with the support of the university's NdV, verifies the actions taken.
 - b) in the case of a "Partially satisfactory" judgment, the assessment period lasts between 1 and 2 years, depending on the type and severity of the issues identified. At the end of this period, a new evaluation is carried out, which may result in a positive outcome, extending the accreditation for the subsequent 4 or 3 years, or it may lead to a second conditional assessment judgment or an "unsatisfactory" judgment. The "conditional" assessment judgment cannot have a total duration of more than 4 years. Conditional assessment of the institution results in the inability to activate new study programmes.
 - c) in the case of a "Not satisfactory" judgment, equivalent to non-accreditation, the outcome is the closure of the institution and its study programmes. In this case, ANVUR proposes to the Ministry the revocation of accreditation, which means that no further cohorts of students can be enrolled. However, students who are already enrolled will be allowed to complete their study programme.

4.5. Initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies

Description: The initial accreditation of Schools of Advanced Studies consists of the authorization by the MUR for the activation of the school and its related doctoral programmes, following an evaluation and in accordance with ANVUR's opinion. To date, the possibility of establishing new Schools of Advanced Studies has been provided only following specific legislative provisions.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) scientific quality requirements of the School; b) structural requirements (residential facilities for students, teaching and scientific facilities, economic-financial sustainability); c) requirements related to student admission (selection procedures, minimum number of students enrolled in doctoral and/or pre-doctoral programmes); d) requirements related to teaching staff (number of professors and researchers); e) requirements related to the services offered (orientation and tutoring, scholarships, funds for research periods in Italy and abroad); f) requirements related to teaching (minimum number of hours of educational activities that students are required to follow in the various disciplines).
- **Actors involved:** School of Advanced Studies, CEV, ANVUR, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The promoting entities of a new School or the Schools already authorised to operate experimentally by the MUR, but that have not yet obtained initial accreditation, submit the application and all required documentation to the MUR. The dossier is directly uploaded to an online platform. After conducting the preliminary eligibility check, the Ministry informs ANVUR of the possibility to access the application and the entire documentation dossier to begin the evaluation.

2. Appointment of the CEV

The Governing Board of ANVUR appoints a highly qualified Evaluation Expert Commission (CEV) tasked with evaluating the application. The number of members in the Commission varies depending on the type of doctoral programmes proposed by each School. The Commission includes, in addition to the Chair, system experts, disciplinary experts, an expert in economic-financial sustainability, a PhD student, and, in the case of Schools offering regular pre-doctoral programmes, a student.

3. Document analysis

The CEV conducts the preliminary examination of the documentation produced by the School, analyzed by individual members of the CEV and then subjected to collegial evaluation, and prepares an Instructional analysis document, which is sent to the School prior to the on-site visit to gather comments, additional details, and supplementary documentation.

4. Institutional visit

The CEVs are required to conduct an on-site visit. The institutional visit is a key moment in the evaluation process, allowing the Commission to engage directly with the various components of the School. The goal is to gather useful information, perceptions, and viewpoints to deepen and verify what has been stated in the provided documents, identifying any organizational and management issues.

During the on-site visit, particular attention is given to the examination of structural and logistical requirements and the services offered to students. The program includes meetings with representatives of the School, including the governing bodies, the NdV, students, department representatives, and key administrative service managers. The duration of the visit is 3 days.

5. Preliminary evaluation

Following the document analysis and the institutional visit, the CEV prepares the Preliminary Report, which contains a judgment on each of the aspects that were evaluated. The report is sent to the School to gather any observations or counterarguments.

6. Counterarguments

The School, once it receives the Preliminary Report, has 10 days to submit any counterarguments, which must include references to specific factual elements aimed at responding to what is reported in the report, with reference to the documentation submitted and the findings of the institutional visit.

7. Final evaluation

The CEV, within 30 days and after considering any counterarguments from the School, prepares the final report, which is collegially approved and sent to the Governing Board, along with the proposal for accreditation or non-accreditation.

8. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board examines the CEV's final report, also considering any counterarguments formulated by the School, and drafts its own opinion. In this phase, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment regarding any aspects it deems to have been inadequately considered, to address any inconsistencies or align the evaluation with that of similar situations already assessed.

The opinion of the Governing Board is sent to the MUR, along with the CEV's report.

Both the MUR and the School may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods, described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

9. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with ANVUR's opinion, the Ministry proceeds with the adoption of the formal decision for the accreditation or non-accreditation of the School.

10. Publication of the evaluation

Simultaneously with the issuance of the MUR's decision, ANVUR publishes the final report of the CEV and, in cases of negative evaluation or positive opinion with specific conditions and/or recommendations, the opinion of ANVUR's Governing Board on its official website.

4.6. Periodic assessment of Schools of Advanced Studies

Description: The periodic assessment of Schools of Advanced Studies involves verifying the maintenance of the requirements that led to the initial accreditation, along with additional

quality requirements for the school's research and teaching activities. Periodic assessment is granted by the MUR following an evaluation and in accordance with ANVUR's opinion.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) verification of the maintenance of the initial accreditation requirements; b) the attractiveness of the School (the ratio of admission applications to available spots, the geographic origin of students, the number of international students); c) the effectiveness of educational and research activities (student performance, employment rate, impact of doctoral graduates' publications); d) the quality of teaching (attraction of research funds, results obtained in the VQR). Currently, ANVUR has not yet initiated the periodic assessment procedures for the Schools of Advanced Studies and, as outlined in Ministerial Decree No. 773/2024 (MUR guidelines for the 2024-2026 period), it is finalizing the proposal to update the evaluation criteria mentioned above.
- **Actors involved:** School of Advanced Studies, NdV, CEV, ANVUR, MUR.
- **Stages of the procedure:** The stages of the periodic assessment procedure will be like those established for universities, as outlined below.
 1. **Selection of departments and doctoral programmes to be evaluated**
 2. **Appointment of the Evaluation Expert Commission (CEV)**
 3. **Self-Assessment Report**
 4. **Document analysis**
 5. **Institutional visit**
 6. **Preliminary evaluation**
 7. **Counterarguments**
 8. **Final evaluation**
 9. **Opinion of the Governing Board**
 10. **Publication of the evaluation**
 11. **Formal decision by MUR**
- **Duration of the process:** Between the moment of selecting the departments and doctoral programmes to be evaluated and the conclusion of the evaluation with the transmission of the final report to the School, a maximum of 330 days may pass. The transmission of the final report to the School occurs within 180 days from the date of the conclusion of the institutional visit.
- **Outcome and follow-up:** Periodic assessment concerns both the institution and its PhD programmes.

4.7. Initial accreditation of university PhD programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of PhD programmes consists of the authorization granted by the MUR for the activation of a doctoral programme, following an evaluation and in accordance with ANVUR's opinion. The accreditation lasts for five years, unless the programme undergoes structural changes, such as a change in the name or in the composition of the teaching staff's board by more than 25%, or a change in the coordinator. In such cases, a new initial accreditation is required.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) quality and adequacy of the doctoral board and the programme coordinator; b) number of doctoral scholarships; c) availability of adequate and stable funding to support the research activities of doctoral students; d) availability of qualified operational and scientific facilities; e) activities for advanced disciplinary training; f) activities for multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary training; g) presence of an adequate internal quality assurance system.
- **Actors involved:** University, NdV, PEV, ANVUR, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The university submits the application for the initial accreditation of the new doctoral programme to the MUR through a dedicated online platform. Within 20 days of submitting the application, the MUR forwards it to ANVUR for the relevant evaluations. The application consists of several sections: a) descriptive information (title of the programme; proposing university); b) description of the training project, programme objectives, and employment prospects; c) type of organisation of the programme (single or collaborative, in which case a list of partner universities and any affiliated or partner businesses); d) presence and description of any curricula; e) composition of the doctoral board and curriculum vitae of the programme coordinator; f) didactic project, with a list and description of the programmes offered; g) information on the number of positions, budget, and available funding for the research activities of doctoral students, including opportunities abroad or with businesses; h) description of the operational and scientific facilities available to doctoral students; i) requirements and admission procedures for doctoral students.

2. Appointment of the Evaluation Expert Panel (PEV)

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints one or more PEV for the evaluation of new PhD programmes within the same disciplinary area (there are 5 disciplinary areas: mathematical, chemical, physical, and earth sciences; biological and medical sciences; architectural and engineering sciences; humanities; legal and social sciences). The number of PEVs appointed for each disciplinary area depends on the number of doctoral programmes. Each PEV consists of at least 3 experts: the Chair, one or more disciplinary experts, and a student.

3. Document analysis and preliminary evaluation

The PEV collegially evaluates each new doctoral programme, thoroughly analysing the informational dossier submitted by the university and using the evaluation protocol adopted by the Agency. Based on the protocol, the PEV's evaluation specifically focuses on the quality and coherence of the training project and the quality of the services provided to doctoral students. Furthermore, for industrial doctoral programmes, the PEV is also tasked with evaluating the adequacy of the agreements between the university offering the programme and the associated businesses. For doctoral programmes of national interest, the PEV additionally evaluates the coherence of the programme's objectives with those defined in the National Research Programme (PNR) and (until its expiration) in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

At the end of the collegial evaluations, the Chair of the PEV prepares a summary Report containing the results of the analysis, the group's considerations, and conclusions, which is approved by the members.

Simultaneously, ANVUR's Research Area officials verify, for each programme, the fulfillment of requirements regarding the composition and scientific qualification of the doctoral board and the programme coordinator, as well as the quantitative requirements for the number of scholarships and resources available to doctoral students.

In the case all aspects are evaluated positively, the opinion is sent to the Governing Board for consideration.

In the case of a negative opinion on the aspects evaluated by the PEV or those related to the doctoral board, the opinion is sent to the university for possible counterarguments.

4. Counterarguments

In the case of a negative preliminary evaluation, the university has 10 days to submit any observations and counterarguments, which are brought to the attention of the PEV for the aspects within its competence, and to the officials of the Agency's Research Area regarding the scientific qualifications of the doctoral board and the coordinator.

5. Final evaluation

The PEV, after reviewing the counterarguments, approves the Final Report, which is sent to the Governing Board, along with the results of the checks conducted by the officials of the Agency's Research Area following the counterarguments.

6. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision based on the PEV's Report, the evaluations carried out by the officials of the Agency's Research Area, and all available documentation for each programme.

The Governing Board's decision concludes with a positive or negative opinion regarding accreditation, along with the corresponding justifications. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the PEV's judgment regarding any aspects it considers having been inadequately addressed, to correct any inconsistencies or align the evaluation with that of other programmes of similar structure, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

The Governing Board's opinion is sent to the university and to the MUR, along with the PEV's Report.

Both the MUR and the university may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods, described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

7. Publication of the evaluation

Ten days after the deadline within which the Ministry and the university can request a review of the evaluation, ANVUR publishes the PEV's Final Report and ANVUR's opinion (in the case of a negative evaluation or recommendations) on its official website.

8. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with ANVUR's opinion, the Ministry adopts the formal decision for the accreditation or non-accreditation of the doctoral programme and sends it to the university.

- **Duration of the process:** The MUR sends the accreditation applications to ANVUR within 20 days from the submission date; ANVUR issues a reasoned opinion within 60 days from the date of receipt of the application.
- **Outcome and follow-up:**
 1. in the case of a positive evaluation outcome, the MUR adopts the accreditation decree for the doctoral programme. Even in the case of a positive opinion, recommendations may be made regarding specific aspects of the doctoral programme that the university must address within the terms set by ANVUR. These aspects will then be subject to verification during the monitoring process in collaboration with the universities' Evaluation Boards. The NdVs, in fact, report their assessments regarding the recommendations made by ANVUR in their annual reports.
 2. in the case of a negative evaluation outcome, the programme cannot be accredited but may be resubmitted for accreditation in the following academic year.

4.8. Periodic assessment of university PhD programmes

Description: The periodic assessment of doctoral programmes aims to verify the continued compliance with the requirements that led to their initial accreditation. The periodic assessment of the programmes coincides with the periodic evaluation and considers the outcomes of evaluations conducted during the periodic assessment of universities, regarding the adequate implementation of actions outlined in the doctoral programme project and the functioning of the programme's internal quality assurance system. Doctoral programmes are subject to periodic assessment at least every five years.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on verifying the continued compliance with the requirements that led to the initial accreditation, considering any conditions or recommendations that were made.
- **Actors involved:** University, NdV, PEV, ANVUR, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Collection of the necessary information

The university, through the same online platform used for initial accreditation, updates the necessary information to verify the continued compliance with the requirements that led to the initial accreditation. The evaluation of the university's NdV is also uploaded to the platform, which becomes particularly significant in relation to the verification of any conditions or recommendations made during the initial accreditation process.

2. Appointment of the PEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints one or more PEV for the evaluation of doctoral programmes within the same disciplinary area (there are 5 disciplinary areas: mathematical, chemical, physical, and earth sciences; biological and medical sciences; architectural and engineering sciences; humanities; legal and social

sciences). The number of PEVs appointed for each disciplinary area depends on the number of doctoral programmes to be evaluated. Each PEV consists of at least 3 experts: the Chair, a student, and one or more disciplinary experts. Depending on the number of programmes to be evaluated, the PEVs may coincide with those designated for the initial accreditation of doctoral programmes.

3. Preliminary evaluation

The PEV collegially evaluates the continued compliance with the quality and coherence of the training project and the services provided to doctoral students. In this phase, the reports of the Evaluation Boards, as well as the outcomes from the periodic assessment visits to universities regarding the functioning of the doctoral quality assurance system, are also examined.

At the end of the collegial evaluations, the Chair of the PEV prepares a summary report containing the results of the analysis, the group's considerations, and conclusions, which is approved by the members. The report may conclude with a positive or negative opinion.

Simultaneously, the ANVUR's Research Area offices verify, for each programme, the continued compliance with the requirements regarding the composition and scientific qualifications of the doctoral board and the course coordinator, as well as the quantitative requirements for the number of scholarships and resources available to doctoral students.

In the case all aspects are evaluated positively, the opinion is sent to the Governing Board for consideration.

In the case of a negative opinion on the aspects evaluated by the PEV or those related to the doctoral board, it is sent to the university for any counterarguments.

The subsequent stages, from 4 to 8, are the same as those described for the initial accreditation of doctoral programmes (procedure 3.7).

4. Counterarguments

5. Final evaluation

6. Opinion of the Governing Board

7. Publication of the evaluation

8. Formal decision by MUR

- **Duration of the process:** ANVUR issues a reasoned opinion within 60 days from the closure of the online platform where all the necessary information for proceeding with the evaluation is uploaded.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 1. in the case of a positive outcome, the evaluation is communicated to the university and the MUR, and this communication serves as periodic assessment for the subsequent five years. Even in the case of a positive outcome, recommendations may be made regarding specific aspects of the study programme that the university must address within the terms set by ANVUR. These aspects will be subject to verification during the annual monitoring, in collaboration with the university's Evaluation Boards,

which are required to report their assessments in their annual report regarding the implementation of the recommendations made by ANVUR.

2. In the case of a negative outcome, the MUR proceeds with the revocation of accreditation for the following academic year. The doctoral programme may subsequently be resubmitted to obtain initial accreditation again.

5. Accreditation and assessment procedures – AFAM

Before describing in detail the individual accreditation procedures for AFAM institutions and their study programmes, it is useful to present an overview that illustrates how and in which procedures aspects related to the standards of the first part of the ESG 2015 (Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance) are evaluated. This approach provides a coherent and integrated overview, linking each standard to the specific procedure in which it is considered, both in terms of initial design and practical application.

Table 2 – Evaluation and Accreditation with respect to the ESG 2015, Part I – Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	AFAM Institutions and decentralized branches		Study Programmes		PhDs
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation
Policy for quality assurance (ESG 1.1) Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.		Assessed in terms of practical implementation		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design
Design and approval of programmes (ESG 1.2) Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	AFAM Institutions and decentralized branches		Study Programmes		PhDs
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation
refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.					
Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3) Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	
Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4) Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g., student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design
Teaching staff (ESG 1.5) Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design
Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6) Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	AFAM Institutions and decentralized branches		Study Programmes		PhDs
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation
activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.					
Information management (ESG 1.7) Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	Assessed in terms of design	Assessed in terms of practical implementation	*
Public information (ESG 1.8) Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.		Assessed in terms of practical implementation		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	*
On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes (ESG 1.9) Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.		Assessed in terms of practical implementation		Assessed in terms of practical implementation	*
Cyclical external quality assurance (ESG 1.10) Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line		After the first 2 years and at the end of the fifth year from the MUR authorization for private AFAM		Yes, at least every five years	*

ESG 2015 STANDARD PART I	AFAM institutions and decentralized branches		Study Programmes		PhDs
	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation	Periodic assessment	Initial accreditation
with the ESG on a cyclical basis.		institutions and the decentralized branches of public AFAM institutions. Subsequently, at least every 5 years.			

* The standard will be evaluated in the periodic assessment procedures

5.1. Initial accreditation of AFAM study programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of AFAM study programmes consists of the authorization granted by the MUR for the activation of a study programme, considering the evaluation and opinion of ANVUR. The described procedure applies to the initial accreditation of first-level programmes at private AFAM institutions and second-level programmes at all AFAM institutions (both public and private).

Evaluation elements: The evaluation refers to the following aspects: a) adequacy of structural resources (buildings and equipment); b) quantitative and qualitative teaching requirements; c) economic and financial sustainability requirements; d) characteristics of the course in relation to territorial needs; e) methods of managing student careers.

- **Actors involved:** AFAM institution, NdV, CEV, ANVUR, CNAM, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The AFAM institution submits the initial accreditation application for the new study course to the MUR through a dedicated online platform. The MUR forwards the application to the CNAM and ANVUR for their respective evaluations. It is the responsibility of the CNAM to express an opinion on the educational structure of the study courses and ANVUR to evaluate all other aspects. ANVUR must express its opinion within 60 days of receiving the documentation. The dossier collects information on the educational requirements and the overall quality of the training proposal, including the reasons for activation, admission procedures, recognition of previous training activities of the enrolled students, internationalization initiatives, research, and the artistic and scientific production of the teachers, and the NdV's Report. It also contains a detailed description of the available building and instrumental facilities, with an analysis of resources (classrooms, laboratories, equipment) and teaching requirements, such as curricula and contracts related to each teaching. Finally, it provides documentation on the financial resources necessary to ensure the sustainability of the course and on the organizational resources, with particular attention to student services.

2. Appointment of the CEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints one or more CEV for the evaluation of new study programmes within the same disciplinary area (e.g., music, fashion, design, etc.). Each Commission is composed of a Chair, disciplinary experts, and a student. The number of CEVs appointed for each disciplinary area depends on the number of

study programmes. On average, each PEV is responsible for evaluating approximately 20 study programmes.

3. Preliminary evaluation

The CEV evaluates the assigned programmes by thoroughly analysing the documentation produced by the institution and using the evaluation protocol adopted by the Agency. Each member of the Commission provides their considerations on the strengths and weaknesses identified and proposes any recommendations. The Chair prepares a comprehensive Report that considers the evaluations of the members and is collegially approved by the CEV. The report may conclude with a positive or negative opinion regarding the accreditation of the programme. In the case of a positive opinion, the Report is sent to the Governing Board of ANVUR for the formulation of the opinion; in the case of a negative opinion, it is sent to the proposing AFAM institution for any counterarguments.

4. Counterarguments

In the case of a negative preliminary evaluation, the proposing institution has 10 days to submit any observations and counterarguments, which will be brought to the attention of the CEV.

5. Final evaluation

The CEV, taking the counterarguments into account, prepares and approves the Final Report, which is then sent to the Governing Board.

6. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision based on the CEV's final report and all available documentation for each programme, including any counterarguments submitted by the institution.

The decision of the Governing Board concludes with a positive or negative opinion regarding accreditation, with the corresponding justifications. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment concerning any aspects it considers inadequately addressed, to correct any inconsistencies or align the evaluation with that of other programmes of similar structure, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

The Governing Board's opinion is sent to the AFAM institution and the MUR, along with the CEV's Report.

Both the MUR and the institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods, described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

7. Publication of the evaluation

Ten days after the deadline within which the Ministry and the institution can request a review of the evaluation, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and the Governing Board's opinion on its official website.

8. Formal decision by MUR

Based on ANVUR's opinion, the MUR adopts the formal decision for the accreditation or non-accreditation of the study programme and sends it to the institution.

- **Duration of the process:** 60 days from the date of receipt of the CNAM's positive opinion regarding the academic structure of the study programme.

- **Outcome and follow-up**

1. In the case of a positive evaluation outcome, the MUR issues the accreditation decree for the programme. Even in the case of a positive opinion, ANVUR may make recommendations on specific aspects, which the institution is required to address within the terms set by ANVUR. These aspects will then be subject to verification during the programme's monitoring, in collaboration with the university's NdV, which is required to report its assessments in the annual report regarding the implementation of the recommendations made by ANVUR.
2. In the case of a negative evaluation outcome, the MUR issues the decree of non-accreditation for the programme.

5.2. Initial accreditation of new AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of new AFAM institutions and the study programmes they propose consists of the authorization granted by the MUR to a private institution, based on the evaluation and opinion of ANVUR, to confer legally recognized degrees. The current regulations do not allow for the establishment of new public AFAM institutions.

- **Evaluation elements:** The evaluation by ANVUR focuses on the following aspects: a) the adequacy of logistical and structural resources (classrooms, spaces, laboratories, libraries, equipment); b) the financial resources supporting the institution's activities; c) the quantity and qualification of the teaching staff employed in the study programmes.
- **Actors involved:** AFAM institution, CEV, ANVUR, CNAM, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The proposing institution submits the accreditation request, signed by the legal representative, through a dedicated on-line platform. The information and documentation provided pertain to the institutional structure, the educational offer already delivered for which at least one three-year study cycle has been completed, the available personnel (both teaching and non-teaching), and the financial sustainability of the initiative. Additionally, information on the research activities carried out by the institution and its related artistic and/or scientific production is provided. After the MUR verifies the admissibility of the application, all documentation is made accessible to ANVUR for evaluation. The CNAM is responsible for expressing an opinion on the academic framework of the study programmes, while ANVUR is responsible for evaluating all other aspects.

2. Appointment of the CEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints a CEV tasked with evaluating the application. The number of members of the Commission varies based on the type and number of study programmes proposed by the institution. The Commission includes, in addition to the Chairperson, system experts, disciplinary experts, an expert in financial sustainability, and a student expert.

3. Preliminary evaluation

The Commission proceeds collegially with the evaluation of the proposal, thoroughly analyzing the documentation provided regarding the institution as a whole and the individual study programmes proposed.

Based on the results of the document examination, the Commission may decide to conduct an on-site visit to further investigate specific aspects. The CEV, with the organizational support of ANVUR's AFAM Unit staff, contacts the proposing entity to arrange the visit. During the visit, the sustainability of logistical and structural requirements is further explored and verified. The on-site visit includes meetings between the delegation designated by the proposing entity and the CEV.

Under the guidance of the Chair, the CEV prepares a preliminary report, which is approved collegially and may conclude with a positive or negative accreditation judgment. The report is then submitted to the Governing Board.

4. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board examines the Report and formulates its own opinion, which may also differ, with appropriate justification, from the one made by the CEV. The ANVUR's opinion is sent to the MUR along with the CEV's Report.

In case of a negative opinion from ANVUR, it is the responsibility of the MUR to communicate the outcome and allow the proposing institution to submit any counterarguments.

In case of a positive opinion from ANVUR, the MUR proceeds with the adoption of the accreditation measure for the institution and the study programmes it has proposed (see point 8). It is worth noting that if the MUR identifies issues with ANVUR's evaluation, it may request a reevaluation of the application, but only once.

5. Counterarguments

The AFAM institution, within 10 days from receiving the CEV's Report and ANVUR's negative opinion from the MUR may submit its counterarguments and send them to the MUR, which will forward them to ANVUR for further evaluation.

6. Final evaluation

The CEV, after considering the institution's counterarguments, prepares within 30 days the Final Report, which is approved collegially and submitted to the Governing Board of ANVUR.

7. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board, based on the evaluations contained in the Final Report of the Commission and considering the counterarguments made by the proposing entity, prepares a final opinion on the accreditation/non-accreditation of the new institution. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment regarding any aspects it believes have not been adequately considered, to remedy any inconsistencies or to align the evaluation with that of similar situations previously assessed or add recommendations and suggestions.

The final opinion is submitted to the Ministry of University and Research (MUR), along with the CEV's Report.

Both the MUR and the institution may request a review of the decision, providing reasons for the request. The review process follows common procedures, described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

8. Formal decision by MUR

Following the definitive opinion of ANVUR, the MUR proceeds with the adoption of the formal authorization decree for the institution (which also includes the indication of the study programmes for which the issuance of legally valid degrees is authorized), or with the denial of authorization, and communicates the decision to the proposing entity.

9. Publication of the evaluation

At the same time as the adoption of the MUR's decision, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and ANVUR's opinion on its official website.

- **Duration of the process:** The evaluation is completed within 120 days from the date the application is submitted to ANVUR by the MUR.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 1. in case of a positive opinion, the evaluation is sent to the MUR for the adoption of the decree granting accreditation to the Institution. The evaluation report may include specific recommendations or conditions, which the ANVUR will verify during the periodic accreditation evaluation, also with the support of the Institution's NdV.
 2. in case of a negative opinion, the evaluation is sent to the MUR for the adoption of the decree of non-accreditation of the Institution.

5.3. Periodic assessment of AFAM institutions (including their decentralised branches and study programmes)

Description: The periodic assessment of AFAM institutions involves verifying, for both the institution's headquarters and study programmes, the continued compliance with the requirements that led to initial accreditation. Under current regulations, periodic assessment is mandatory for private AFAM institutions and for decentralized branches of public AFAM institutions. In both cases, the evaluation takes place at different stages: a) at the end of the second year following the initial accreditation, through which the institution was authorized by the Ministry of Education, University, and Research (MUR) to grant legally recognized degrees; b) at the end of the fifth year of activity and – subsequently – c) every five years thereafter. The procedure described is experimental (and thus optional) for public AFAM institutions about their legal headquarters. The procedure will become mandatory once the ministerial regulation is completed.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) the adequacy of logistical and structural resources (classrooms, spaces, laboratories, libraries, equipment); b) the financial and economic resources supporting activities; c) the number and qualifications of the teaching staff employed in the study programs; d) the student services provided. Additional aspects considered in the experimental procedure for state AFAM institutions include: i) the methods and tools used for internal quality assurance, ii) the processes for the design and systematic monitoring of study programs, and iii) information management, including transparency and accessibility.
- **Actors involved:** AFAM institution, NdV, CEV, ANVUR and MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Selection of the study programmes to be evaluated

In addition to evaluating the institution, ANVUR's Governing Board selects a subset of study programs (ranging from 4 to 12) to be assessed during the periodic assessment

process. The type and number of study programs depend on the characteristics of the educational offerings and the size of the institution. For decentralized campuses of state AFAM institutions, all study programs offered at the decentralized campus are considered.

The selection is communicated to the AFAM institution at least two months prior to the site visit. This allows the institution sufficient time to prepare a comprehensive self-assessment report (see point 3).

2. Appointment of the CEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints a CEV, with the number of members varying based on the number of study programs to be assessed. The Commission includes, in addition to the President, a coordinator who also serves as secretary, system experts, subject-matter experts, student experts, and an expert in financial and economic sustainability. The names of the Commission members are communicated to the institution at least four weeks prior to the site visit.

3. Self-Assessment Report

The institution is required to prepare a Self-Assessment Report, to be submitted to the Agency at least 4 weeks before the visit. In the Report, the institution must provide a structured presentation of all the necessary information to assess its academic and organizational quality. For private AFAM institutions or decentralized branches of public AFAM institutions, the Report must include an update of all the information previously evaluated during the initial accreditation, supplemented by any information requested because of conditions or recommendations. In the procedure developed for public institutions, the Report includes self-assessment judgments for each point of attention in the Experimental Periodic Assessment Model, along with the indication of the documentary sources confirming their validity.

The Report and all necessary documents for the evaluation are uploaded by the institution to the telematics platform dedicated to the procedure.

4. Document analysis

The CEV analyzes the Self-Assessment Report and the documentary sources provided by the institution.

Documentary analysis is a central moment in the evaluation process and follows the guidelines defined by ANVUR to ensure a structured and transparent approach. This activity involves the entire CEV, whose members divide specific tasks based on their expertise.

Following the documentary analysis, the experts identify the aspects to be further investigated during the subsequent visit. Unless otherwise decided by the CEV, the visit is conducted remotely for periodic assessment after the first two years from the ministerial authorization for decentralized branches of state AFAM institutions and for non-state AFAM institutions.

The visit is conducted preferably on-site for periodic assessment at the end of the first five years of activity or in the case of the experimental procedure for state AFAM institutions.

The President and Coordinator manage the work of the CEV and prepare the detailed visit programme. The visit programme, shared with the institution, defines specific meetings with key figures and will form an integral part of the Final Report.

5. Institutional visit

The visit is a fundamental moment in the evaluation process, allowing the CEV to directly engage with the various components of the institution to gather further useful information for the evaluation and to deepen/verify what has been stated in the documents provided.

During the visit, particular attention is paid to verifying the functioning of the internal quality assurance system and, in the case of an on-site visit, also to verifying the facilities at the location and the equipment available to the various study programmes.

The programme includes meetings with representatives of the institution, including governing bodies, the evaluation unit, student representatives, course leaders, and key administrative service managers. The duration ranges from 1 to 3 days, depending on the size and organizational complexity of the institution.

The entire CEV (President, Coordinator, system experts, economic-financial sustainability expert, student experts) participates in the visit.

The visit (whether remote or on-site) concludes with a meeting between the CEV and the institution's reference delegation. During the meeting, the President of the CEV briefly presents the main positive and/or negative aspects that have emerged.

6. Preliminary evaluation

The CEV, within 30 days of the completion of the institutional visit, prepares the Preliminary Report, which includes an evidence-based analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the document review and confirmed during the institutional visit.

The Report, drafted under the responsibility of the President and collegially approved by the CEV, is sent to the AFAM Organizational Unit, which verifies its contents with the support of the Governing Board and sends it to the institution.

7. Counterarguments

The institution – once it has received the Preliminary Report – has 30 days to submit any CEV's Report or counterarguments, which must contain references to factual elements aimed at responding to what is reported in the report, with reference to the documentation presented for the document review and/or the results of the institutional visit.

8. Final evaluation

The CEV, within 30 days and after considering any counterarguments from the Institution, prepares the Final Report, which is collegially approved and sent to the Governing Board.

9. Opinion of the Governing Board

The Governing Board, within 30 days of receiving the CEV's final report, prepares a periodic assessment report in which it delivers its positive or negative judgment. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment if it considers certain aspects to have been inadequately addressed, to resolve any inconsistencies, or to align and harmonize the evaluation with that of similar previously assessed cases. Additionally, it may include recommendations and suggestions.

The ANVUR Report, accompanied by the CEV's Report and the assessment judgment, is sent to the MUR and to the Institution.

Both the Ministry and the institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common procedures, as outlined in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

10. Formal decision by MUR

Following the final opinion of ANVUR, the MUR proceeds with the adoption of the formal decision for periodic assessment or non-accreditation and transmits it to the proposing institution.

11. Publication of the evaluation

At the same time as the adoption of the MUR's decision, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and ANVUR's opinion on its official website.

- **Duration of the process:** Between the selection of the study courses to be evaluated and the conclusion of the evaluation with the transmission of the Final Report to the institution, a maximum of 270 days elapses. The transmission of the Final Report to the institution occurs within 120 days from the date of the conclusion of the institutional visit.
- **Outcome and follow-up:** Periodic assessment concerns both the institution's headquarters and the study programmes it offers.
 1. in the case of a positive opinion, the assessment is valid for 5 years for both the campus and the study programmes. For private AFAM institutions and decentralized branches of public AFAM institutions, the first periodic assessment lasts 3 years, while subsequent assessments are valid for 5 years. The evaluation Report may include specific recommendations or conditions and a timeline within which ANVUR, also with the assistance of the institution's NdV, verifies the actions taken.
 2. in the case of a negative opinion, the evaluation is transmitted to the MUR for the adoption of a motivated decree of non-accreditation of the institution. In the case of a private institution, this results in the revocation of the authorization to issue legally recognized degrees. In the case of public institutions, this leads to the revocation of the authorization to issue degrees at the decentralized branch.

5.4. Initial accreditation of new decentralised branches of AFAM institutions and their proposed study programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of decentralized branches of AFAM institutions consists of the authorization granted by the MUR, considering the evaluation and opinion of ANVUR, to activate programmes in municipalities different from the institution's legal headquarters or other campuses where the institution has established study programmes. The current regulations on decentralized campuses apply to public AFAM institutions.

- **Evaluation elements:** ANVUR's evaluation focuses on the following aspects: a) the overall sustainability of the institution; b) the adequacy of logistical and structural resources at the decentralized campus (classrooms, spaces, laboratories, libraries, equipment); c) the financial resources supporting the institution's activities; d) the number and qualification of the teaching staff involved in the study programmes; e) student services; f) the transparency of information.
- **Actors involved:** AFAM institution, CEV, ANVUR, CNAM, MUR

- **Stages of the procedure**

- 1. Submission of the application**

The proposing institution submits the accreditation request, signed by the legal representative, through a dedicated online platform. The information and documentation refer to the institutional structure of the institution, the educational offer to be activated at the decentralized campus, the staff to be employed at the decentralized campus, the financial sustainability of both the institution and the decentralized campus, the facilities where activities will take place at the decentralized campus, and the services offered to students. After the MUR verifies the admissibility of the application, all documentation is made accessible to ANVUR for the relevant evaluations. The CNAM is responsible for expressing an opinion on the academic structure of the study programmes (if they differ from those already active at the institution), while ANVUR is responsible for evaluating all other aspects.

- 2. Appointment of the Evaluation Expert Commission (CEV)**

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints a CEV tasked with evaluating the application. The number of members of the Commission varies depending on the type and number of study programmes planned at the decentralized branch. The Commission includes, in addition to the Chair, system experts, disciplinary experts, an economic-financial sustainability expert, and a student expert.

- 3. Preliminary evaluation**

The Commission collegially evaluates the proposal by thoroughly analysing the documentation produced regarding the institution as a whole and the decentralized campus. Based on the results of the document review, the Commission may decide to schedule an on-site visit, particularly to further examine the logistical and structural resources at the decentralized campus. In this case, the CEV, with the organizational support of the AFAM Unit of ANVUR, contacts the proposing entity to arrange the visit. During the visit, the requirements for logistical and structural sustainability are reviewed and verified. The on-site visit includes meetings between the delegation designated by the proposing entity and the CEV.

The CEV, under the guidance of the Chair, prepares a Preliminary Report that is collegially approved and may conclude with either a positive or negative accreditation judgment. The report is then transmitted to the Governing Board.

- 4. Opinion of the Governing Board**

ANVUR's Governing Board examines the Report and formulates its opinion, which may differ from that of the CEV, with appropriate justifications. ANVUR's opinion is sent to the MUR along with the CEV's report.

In the case of a negative opinion from ANVUR, it is the responsibility of the MUR to communicate the outcome and allow the proposing institution to present any counterarguments.

In the case of a positive opinion from ANVUR, the MUR proceeds with the adoption of the accreditation decision for the institution's decentralized branch and the study programmes to be activated at that branch (see point 8).

It should be noted that if the MUR identifies any issues with ANVUR's evaluation, it may request a re-evaluation of the application.

5. Counterarguments

The institution, within 10 days of receiving from the MUR the CEV's Report and the negative opinion adopted by ANVUR, may formulate its counterarguments, and send them to the MUR, which will forward them to ANVUR for the relevant evaluations.

6. Final evaluation

The CEV, after considering any counterarguments from the institution, prepares the Final Report, which is collegially approved and sent to the Governing Board.

7. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board, based on the Final Report of the Commission and considering the counterarguments formulated by the institution, issues a final opinion on the suitability of the decentralized branch of the AFAM institution.

At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the CEV's judgment regarding any aspects it deems to have been inadequately considered, to address any inconsistencies or to align the evaluation with those of similar situations previously evaluated, or to add recommendations and suggestions.

The final opinion is sent to the MUR, along with the CEV's report.

Both the MUR and the institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common methods, described in the specific "Review / Complaints procedure" 3.4 section.

8. Formal decision by MUR

Following ANVUR's positive opinion, the MUR proceeds with the adoption of the formal decision to authorize the decentralized branch, or to deny its opening, and communicates this decision to the AFAM institution.

9. Publication of the evaluation

At the same time as the adoption of the MUR's decision, ANVUR publishes the CEV's Final Report and ANVUR's opinion on its official website.

- **Duration of the process:** The evaluation is completed within 60 days from the date the application is transmitted to ANVUR by the MUR.
- **Outcome and follow-up**
 1. in the case of a positive opinion, the evaluation is sent to the MUR for the adoption of the decree authorizing the opening of the decentralized campus. The evaluation report may contain specific recommendations or conditions, which ANVUR will verify during the periodic accreditation evaluation, also with the support of the institution's NdV. The decentralized branch will subsequently undergo periodic evaluation at the end of the second year of operation, at the end of the fifth year, and then every five years thereafter.
 2. in the case of a negative opinion, the evaluation is sent to the MUR for the adoption of a reasoned decision to deny authorization for the decentralized branch. A new request for the opening of the decentralized branch can only be submitted after the conclusion of the following academic biennium.

5.5. Initial accreditation of AFAM PhD programmes

Description: The initial accreditation of AFAM PhD programmes consists of the authorization granted by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) to activate a doctoral programme, following evaluation and in accordance with the opinion of ANVUR. The accreditation is valid for five years, unless the programme undergoes structural changes, such as a modification of its name or the composition of the teaching staff by more than 25%, or a change in the programme coordinator: in these cases, a new initial accreditation process is required. It is worth noting that AFAM institutions have been authorized to offer doctoral programmes starting from the academic year 2024/25 following the issuance of the Regulation under Ministerial Decree No. 470/2024.

- **Evaluation elements:** The evaluation by ANVUR covers the following aspects: a) the quality and adequacy of the Board of Professors and the Coordinator; b) the number of doctoral scholarships; c) the availability of sufficient and stable funding to support the research activities of the doctoral candidates; d) the availability of qualified operational and scientific structures; e) activities related to advanced disciplinary training; f) activities for multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary training; g) the presence of an adequate internal quality assurance system.
- **Actors involved:** AFAM institution, NdV, PEV, ANVUR, MUR
- **Stages of the procedure**

1. Submission of the application

The institution submits the application for initial accreditation of the new doctoral programme to the MUR through a dedicated online platform. Within 20 days of submitting the application, the Ministry forwards it to the ANVUR for the evaluation. The application consists of various sections: a) descriptive information (title of the course; proposing university); b) description of the training project, course objectives, and employment prospects; c) type of organization of the PhD programme (single or collaborative format, and in the case of collaboration, a list of universities and any associated or partnered enterprises); d) presence and description of any curricula; e) composition of the teaching staff and *curriculum vitae* of the programme Coordinator; f) training project, including a list and description of the subjects offered; g) information on the number of places, budget, and funding available for research activities, both abroad and with enterprises, for doctoral students; h) description of the operational and scientific facilities available to the doctoral students; i) requirements and methods for admitting doctoral students.

2. Appointment of the PEV

ANVUR's Governing Board appoints one or more PEV to assess new doctoral programs within the same disciplinary area (e.g., Music, Art, Fashion, etc.). The number of PEVs appointed for each disciplinary area depends on the number of doctoral programs to be evaluated. Each PEV is composed of at least three members: the President, one or more subject-matter experts, and a student representative.

3. Document analysis and preliminary evaluation

The PEV collegially evaluates each new doctoral programme by thoroughly analysing the informational dossier submitted by the university and using the evaluation protocol adopted by the Agency. Based on the protocol, the PEV's evaluation particularly focuses on the quality and coherence of the training programme and the quality of

the services provided to the doctoral candidates. Additionally, for industrial doctoral programmes, the PEV is tasked with evaluating the adequacy of agreements made between the university offering the programme and the associated company or companies; for national interest doctoral programmes, the PEV also evaluates the alignment of the programme's objectives with those defined in the National Research Programme (PNR) and (until expiration) in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

At the end of the collegial evaluations, the PEV President drafts a summary Report containing the results of the analysis, considerations, and conclusions of the group, which is approved by the members.

At the same time, the Research Area officials of ANVUR verify that each PhD programme meets the requirements related to the composition and scientific qualifications of the Doctoral Board and the Coordinator, as well as the quantitative requirements regarding the number of scholarships and the resources available to doctoral candidates.

In case of a positive opinion on all aspects evaluated, the Report is forwarded to the Governing Board.

In case of a negative opinion on the aspects evaluated by the PEV or on those related to the Doctoral Board, the report is sent to the university for any possible counterarguments.

4. Counterarguments

In case of a negative preliminary evaluation, the AFAM institution has 10 days to formulate any observations and counterarguments, which will be brought to the attention of the PEV for the aspects within its competence, and to the officials of the Research Area of the Agency regarding the scientific qualifications of the Doctoral Board and the Course Coordinator.

5. Final evaluation

The PEV, after reviewing the counterarguments, approves the Final Report, which is then transmitted to the Governing Board, along with the results of the checks carried out by the officials of the Agency's Research Area following the counterarguments.

6. Opinion of the Governing Board

ANVUR's Governing Board makes its decision based on the PEV's Report, the evaluations carried out by the officers of the Agency's Research Area, and all the available documentation for each programme.

The decision of the Governing Board concludes with a positive or negative opinion regarding accreditation, along with the relevant justifications. At this stage, the Governing Board may also modify the PEV's judgment regarding any aspects it believes have not been adequately considered, to remedy any inconsistencies, or to align the evaluation with that of other programmes with similar structures, or it may add recommendations and suggestions.

The opinion of the Governing Board is sent to the Institution and to the MUR, along with the PEV's Report.

Both the MUR and the Institution may request, with justification, a review of the decision. The review procedure follows common modalities, as described in the specific section "Review / Complaints" 3.4 procedure.

7. Publication of the evaluation

ANVUR, after 10 days from the deadline within which the Ministry and the AFAM Institution can request a review of the evaluation, publishes the PEV's Final Report and ANVUR's opinion (in the case of a negative evaluation or recommendations) on its official website.

8. Formal decision by MUR

In accordance with ANVUR's opinion, the Ministry adopts the formal decision on the accreditation or non-accreditation of the doctoral programme and transmits it to the Institution.

- **Duration of the process:** The MUR sends the accreditation applications to ANVUR within 20 days of submission; ANVUR issues a reasoned opinion within 60 days of receiving the application.
- **Outcome and follow-up:**
 1. in the case of a positive evaluation outcome, the MUR adopts the accreditation decree for the AFAM PhD programme. Even in the case of a positive opinion, recommendations may be made regarding specific aspects of the doctoral programme that the institution is required to address within the terms set by ANVUR. These aspects will then be subject to verification during the monitoring phase, in collaboration with the NdV of the AFAM institution. In fact, the NdV reports its assessments regarding the recommendations made by ANVUR in its annual report.
 2. in case of a negative evaluation outcome, the PhD programme cannot be accredited but can be resubmitted for accreditation in the following academic year.