

Advisory Committee meeting of 9 October 2018 Meeting minutes

Participants at the meeting

The ANVUR Advisory Committee met on Tuesday 9 October 2018, at midday, at the organisation's headquarters at Via Ippolito Nievo, 35 in Rome. The following individuals were present:

Organisation	Member of the Advisory Committee	Present	Present by videoconference	Absent with apologies	Absent
Unified Conference of the State, Regions, Cities and Local Authorities	Adriana Agrimi			X	
European Research Council	Claudio Bordignon	X			
National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL)	Maria Castriotta		X		
National Council of University Students (CNSU)	Nicola D'Ambrosio			X	
National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL)	Michele Dau	X			
National Council of University Students (CNSU)	Pietro De Ponti			X	
National Council of University Students (CNSU)	Mario Donadio			X	
European Students' Union/ESIB	Fernando Miguel Galan Palomares			X	
European Research Council	Belen Gavela			X	
Lyncean Academy	Renato Guarini			X	
National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL)	Costanzo Jannotti Pecci			X	
National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL)	Andrea Lapicciarella	X			
Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities (CRUI)	Gaetano Manfredi			X	
National University Council (CUN)	Alessandra Petrucci	X			
Permanent Conference of the Administrative Directors and Managers of Italian Universities	Gabriele Rizzetto		X		
European Students' Union/ESIB	Mattia Sguazzini		X		
European University Association	Rolf Tarrach			X	
Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Dirk Van Damme			X	

The meeting was attended by the Director of ANVUR, Mr Sandro Momigliano, Prof. Daniele Checchi, a member of the Governing Board, and Ms Cecilia Bibbò, an official from the Universities and AFAM Area, who assisted the President as the secretary compiling the minutes.

Activities of the meeting

The President, Prof. Alessandra Petrucci, first informed the persons present that although the number of people present at the meeting was not legally sufficient to be able to deliberate, the meeting would nonetheless take place in order to further explore the issues included on the agenda.

The meeting commenced with an analysis of the items on the agenda, which were the following:

1. Notices
2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018
3. Presentation of the Biennial Report on the status of the university and research system for 2018
4. Progress on EQR 2015-2019

5. Update to the ENQA accreditation process
6. Working plan for the Advisory Committee, in accordance with Article 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Committee
7. Other business

The President proposed a reorganisation of the items on the agenda, because of the availability of the Director and Governing Board member. By unanimous agreement of the members of the Committee, the agenda was reorganised as follows:

1. Progress on EQR 2015-2019
2. Update to the ENQA accreditation process
3. Presentation of the Biennial Report on the status of the university and research system for 2018
4. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018
5. Notices
6. Working plan for the Advisory Committee, in accordance with Article 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Committee
7. Other business

1. Progress on EQR 2015-2019

The President gave the floor to Prof. Daniele Checchi, who reviewed the initiatives promoted by the Agency's Governing Board in relation to the Evaluation of the Quality of Research (EQR) exercise for the period 2015-2019. Checchi informed those present that the current composition of the Governing Board would shortly be modified following the commencement of the term of office of its new members and that he would not therefore be present when the new EQR 2015-2019 commenced. The end of the term of office of four of the current six members of the Governing Board is set for November 2019, with the remaining two members leaving office in March 2020, and thus at the time when work on the new EQR was to commence.

The Governing Board had therefore agreed that discussions on the evaluation methodologies and technical meetings for proposal of improvement actions could commence. The objective was to identify points for innovation and change compared to the previous exercises, to be proposed to the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), as part of a modification to the Guidelines.

Furthermore, in order to be able to provide the scientific community and the MIUR with a third-party assessment of the observations made by ANVUR about the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian EQR system, the Governing Board had appointed a group of five major international experts responsible for drafting an assessment report on the two previous exercises by the end of the year. The experts appointed were the following:

- Nuria Sebastian Galles, Tenured Professor of Psychology at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, already Vice-President of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC);
- Thed van Leeuwen, infometrician and senior researcher at the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) at the University of Leiden;
- Claudio Galderisi, Tenured Professor of Medieval French Language and Literature at the University of Poitiers and expert from the French evaluation agency Hcéres;
- Giuseppe Bertola, Tenured Professor of Political Economy at the University of Turin, already a member of the Review Panel for the economic area in the UK Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and in the German Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft Excellence Initiative;
- Mauro Perretti, Professor of Immunopharmacology and Director of Research at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry of the William Harvey Research Institute at Queen Mary University of London.

Checchi continued by noting that the experts had been asked to draft a report, on the basis of their experience at foreign institutions, on the validity of the evaluations and rankings obtained using specific methodologies. The experts met on 14 and 15 September 2018 at the ANVUR offices. During the meetings, they examined articles relating to the principal criticisms made about the evaluation methods adopted in the previous EQR,

including some drafted by Roars and by Giovanni Abramo from the CNR.

The members of the Advisory Committee asked to be able to see the material and the scientific criticisms sent to the team of experts.

Checchi continued by stating that the Governing Board had also initiated a discussion among its members of the critical aspects recorded in the final reports from the various Groups of Evaluation Experts (GEE) of the EQR, operating at area level, in past years. There are essentially three points currently being discussed:

- 1) Fixed number of outputs: in the first EQR the number of outputs requested for university researchers was set as three, while for those from research organisations this was set as five. In the second EQR the number of outputs was reduced to two for universities and four for research organisations, with the possibility that monographs could be counted as two outputs. A problem emerged related to co-authorship, which resulted in a disparity in particular for the scientific sectors or areas where this phenomenon is highly developed. Possible solutions could be to vary the number of outputs to be submitted per area or weight the outputs on the basis of the number of co-authored items, using a specific algorithm.
- 2) Research area: to date, this has been based on consolidation of scientific disciplinary sectors (SDS), but there are other possible options. We need only think of the ERC research areas, which are cross-sector or, in any case, do not correspond exactly to the SDS. This is a choice that does not fall exclusively to ANVUR, but proposals may nonetheless be made for the attention of the various competent bodies. From ANVUR's point of view, separating the areas from the scientific disciplinary sectors would have the advantage of making the difference between the evaluation of research and the qualifications more transparent;
- 3) Inclusion of department projects as an element for assessing the capacity of departments: the analysis of the departments of excellence has shown that in some cases the snapshot obtained does not reflect the actual capacity of the departments, based on the EQR scores of the individual members but standardised. However, there has been positive feedback from some department directors, who have stated that the drafting of the Department Project had helped in specifying their project ideas. One possible response could therefore be for the departments to voluntarily submit a project file that defines each department's intended projects, namely the evaluation element that has not so far been taken into consideration, accompanied by appropriate scientific output.

Checchi concluded his comments on the issues that the Governing Board is currently discussing in preparation of the next EQR, and invited the Advisory Committee to provide new ideas and observations on these aspects. As we know, the MIUR sets the guidelines for the EQR and initiates the exercise through the launch of a call for tenders. ANVUR's objective is to ensure that the guidelines are published as quickly as possible, to give the universities time to prepare, at least before the closure of the analysis period.

Daniele Dau then took the floor, and asked whether the spin-offs of research activities on economic and social life would be taken into consideration in the next EQR, whether or not through the introduction of a specific indicator. Dau noted that the parameters used to construct the first EQR were highly internal to academia, but it was nonetheless appropriate to assess capacity vis-à-vis external factors. Dau emphasised how research often requires lengthy periods to register significant effects, but there is also a need to consider the results obtained within an appropriate time frame.

Checchi responded that the spin-offs from research for the world outside academia fall within third-mission activities, classified as technology transfer and social impact. The quality of the data on technology transfer is good, because there are data banks that can be used easily. In terms of social impact, the analysis is more difficult. With a view to the forthcoming EQR, it is assumed that the English Research Excellence Framework (REF) model is applied, with the universities being asked to submit case studies that enable a qualitative evaluation of the spin-offs of their research activities.

Gabriele Rizzetto then took the floor, and proposed a discussion on the question of open access of research results and the repercussions of this on the impact factor. Prof. Checchi reviewed the recent hearing by the

Chamber of Deputies' Commission on Culture on this subject. In that hearing, ANVUR stated that it was in favour of the decision, by the Ministry, to make the results of research by academic researchers open access. Before open access, there is however a need to have a research archive. One method of creating open access could be to instruct the universities to complete the development of research archives with reserved internal access, which contain the publications. This solution would represent a significant simplification for the next EQR, because the individuals concerned would not need to undertake a physical upload of their publications, but simply the link or DOI. ANVUR would thus sign specific agreements with the various university archives, rather than signing agreements with the publishers, so that the researchers could upload pdfs of their publications.

ANVUR Director Mr Momigliano proposed providing the Advisory Committee with the slides of the event and additional useful material. The President Ms Petrucci expressed interest on behalf of the Committee in receiving these documents.

Before closing the discussion on the subject, the President made reference to the ANAC Guidelines and the two instructions relating to the composition of the GEE contained in that document, namely greater transparency in the selection procedures for experts and adoption of the principle of rotation of experts. Prof. Checchi noted the need to guarantee the presence of experts who represent the various areas, sub-areas or schools of thought and necessarily have significant competence and experience on the subject of research evaluation. The identification of a coordinator is essential.

Having completed his comments, Prof. Checchi thanked those present and left the meeting at 13:25. Discussion of the first item on the agenda having been concluded, the President introduced the next item.

2. Update to the ENQA accreditation process

The President asked the Director to review the accreditation approach undertaken with the ENQA. Sandro Momigliano noted that the ENQA inspection was scheduled for 20-22 November 2018. Final modifications were being made to the inspection programme, and it would then be sent to all persons involved. As indicated by the President, the Advisory Committee is also involved and was to be interviewed on 20 November. Considering the limited time available, the identification of only a limited number of people was requested for each meeting. The Committee was also required to select its own representatives (approximately four people).

The Director noted that the activities covered by the ENQA inspection are the following:

- Accreditation of new universities;
- Accreditation of new university programmes;
- Periodic assessment of accredited universities;
- Periodic assessment of accredited programmes;
- Accreditation of PhD programmes;
- Accreditation of postgraduate medical programmes;
- Accreditation of programmes in art, music and dance HEIs.

ENQA wishes to interview the personnel involved in AVA and AFAM assessment and then those concerned with accreditation of doctorates. There will then be a meeting with the Rectors and QA managers in the universities, with some of our evaluation experts and then also with the principal stakeholders (MIUR, CRUI, CODAU, etc.). As we know, for procedures associated with periodic accreditation of university courses and sites, these are based on the European guidelines and there should not therefore be significant findings. Potential critical observations could arise for accreditation of research doctorates and for the evaluation of AFAM institutions where, as expressly provided by the legislation, ANVUR's task is very limited and restricted. ANVUR may therefore refer any discussion to the legislators and open a dialogue on these issues.

The Director concluded by stating that the ENQA assessment will be a valuable opportunity to improve the Agency's procedures.

Having discussed the second item on the agenda, the President moved on to the next item.

3. Presentation of the Biennial Report on the status of the university and research system for 2018

The President asked the Director to provide a brief review of the principal results of the Biennial Report presented in July last.

The Director noted that the versions of the report, both full and summary, are provided on the Agency's website and can be downloaded using a link. There is also a zip file containing all of the individual chapters. In general, the Report shows a consolidation of the signs of improvement already identified two years ago and a mitigation of many of the difficulties highlighted at that time. It should first be noted that there has been a recovery in enrolments and a fall in dropouts. After the substantial fall in the years of the crisis, enrolments have in fact begun to increase again since 2014. In 2017/18, 291,000 students were enrolled, representing an increase of 22,000 units (8.2%) compared to the minimum seen in 2013/14. The percentage of dropouts between the first and second year has fallen over four years by around 15% to just over 12% of enrolled students in 2016/17 for three-year courses and from 9.6% to 7.5% for single-cycle courses. The greater regularity and reduced dispersion of study programmes has increased the proportion of graduates in the population: the increase over the last three years has been 2.7 points among those aged 25-34 years, thus reducing the gap compared to the European average by 1%. Furthermore, the performance of graduates has been improving in recent years, in both absolute terms and in relation to diploma holders.

Mattia Sguazzini asked whether it was possible to have data on the fees paid by the students broken down by ISEE band. These data are currently only available broken down by tax-paid band. The Director responded by proposing an internal discussion and potentially dialogue with the Ministry. For the part relating to the series on funding of research, Andrea Lapicciarella suggested applying the monetary deflation index to GDP.

The Director thanked him for that observation, noting that suggestions on the report from the Advisory Committee were welcome, including for future editions of the Report.

Having completed his comments, the Director thanked those present and left the meeting at 14:09.

Having discussed the third item on the agenda, the President introduced the next item.

4. Notices

In relation to notices, the President noted that 25 September last had seen the closure of the call for selection of a new member of ANVUR's Governing Board. The Committee would work through the applications received, identifying a list of 30 profiles, from which the Minister would select a short-list of 15.

The final notice related to the next meetings for 2019. The President indicated the following three dates: 15 January, 14 May and 15 October.

Lastly, the President advised that she had asked the ANVUR Vice-President, Prof. Raffaella Rumiati, for the meetings to be able to use a more functional videoconference system.

Having examined the fourth item on the agenda, the President moved on to the next item.

5. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018

The President stated that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018 had been approved. As there were no further comments, the President introduced the next item on the agenda.

6. Working plan for the Advisory Committee, in accordance with Article 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Committee

The President encouraged the members of the Advisory Committee to systematise the discussion points presented, proposing the following working plan:

- Produce a document containing critical observations in relation to the EQR on the basis of the reflections shared by Prof. Checchi. The President requested that ANVUR provide a list of experts who are members of the group responsible for drafting the report on the previous EQR and the material shared with those individuals. She emphasised the importance of being able to suggest actions that could improve aspects such as transparency and communication. It was proposed that a deadline of 15 January be set for observations, including on the basis of the document that was to be produced by the experts and provided to the Advisory Committee.
- Suggest methods for external sharing of the data banks held by ANVUR, while recognising that the majority of these are provided by the Ministry. Many data are not completely transparent and the processing of some of these data raises questions relating to privacy.

Having completed discussion on the sixth item on the agenda, the meeting moved on to the next item.

7. Other business

The President proposed the drafting of a joint document, when the term of office of the Committee members has come to an end, on the strengths and weaknesses relating to its activities.

With regard to participation of representatives of the Advisory Committee in the interview with the ENQA on 20 November 2018, the President and Messrs Squazzini and Lapicciarella confirmed their availability.

As the final item on the agenda had been addressed, the President thanked the participants and declared the meeting closed at 14:45. The next meeting will be held on 15 January 2019.

THE PRESIDENT

(Prof. Alessandra Petrucci)¹