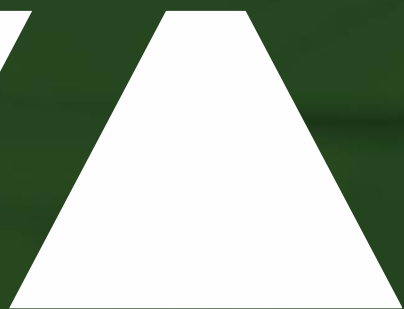
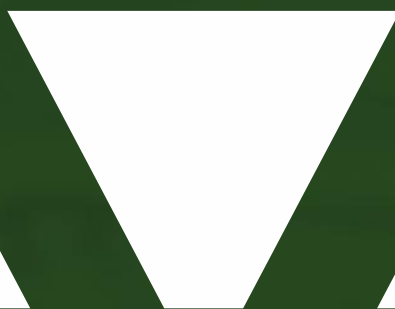


ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL: RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION FOR OFFICIAL DOCTORAL DEGREES IN THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY

June 2026



**VALENCIAN AGENCY FOR
STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT
AND FORECASTING**



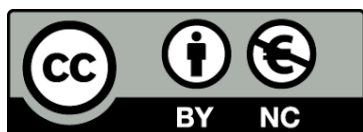
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1. INTRODUCTION AND APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

The Spanish university system undertook a reform of its educational provision and its organisation by adopting the principles that formed the essence of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The implementation of the European Higher Education Area led to greater university autonomy in the design of new undergraduate, master's and doctoral programmes; and Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities (LOU) laid the foundations for adapting the university system to the new EHEA.

Thus, the adoption of a cyclical structure comprising the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate degrees—which progressively incorporated more specialised training in terms of employability or research—has been completed at all universities within the Spanish higher education system.

Alongside a new structuring of degree programmes and the incorporation of a student-centred, competence-based approach to education, it is worth highlighting two further principles underpinning the broad agreement that is the EHEA. The first lies in recognising the need to promote a more active approach to teaching, based on a teaching–learning methodology in which the lecture must share centre stage with other strategies and methods of teaching and learning, which seek to strengthen students' ability to work independently, and which has the use of new information and communication technologies as one of its main pillars. The second lies in promoting and facilitating the international mobility of our students so that they can study at other universities abroad, particularly in other European countries. To achieve this objective, the common model for calculating academic workload in terms of credits under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was adopted.

The passage of time and changes in the social context have made it necessary to implement essential reforms to address the existing mismatches between social needs and the university system. To this end, a comprehensive reform of the legal framework governing universities was undertaken, culminating in Organic Law 2/2023 of 22 March on the University System (LOSU), which repealed the aforementioned Organic Law on Universities in its entirety.

The accumulation of changes to the regulation of official university education in Spain made it necessary and proportionate to introduce new legislation which, whilst guaranteeing the principle of legal certainty in the functioning of the Spanish university system, would move towards an organisation adapted to the demands of society and to the disruptive changes taking place in the economy and in technology, as well as being more flexible in its components and structure, and which, at the same time, promote the necessary effective innovation in teaching.

Thus, Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for ensuring its quality, was enacted with the aim of ensuring the quality of university studies as an educational service for the whole of Spanish society; official university

degrees must therefore be subject to external evaluation procedures in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ESG), in accordance with the provisions now set out in Title II of Organic Law 2/2023 of 22 March on the University System and in accordance with the provisions of the aforementioned Royal Decree.

The counterpart to the increase in university autonomy is that proposals for new degree programmes must undergo an ex ante evaluation process (known as verification) and, after six or eight years, an ex post evaluation process (accreditation), in accordance with the procedure and timeframes established by the Valencian Regional Government, a process which, in all cases, must include a visit by experts from outside the university. Between these two processes, universities carry out annual monitoring of the progress of the degree programmes they have introduced, in accordance with their internal quality assurance system (SAIC).

This framework is supplemented by Royal Decree 905/2025 of 7 October, amending Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and higher education institutions, and the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions; Royal Decree 1509/2008 of 12 September, which regulates the Register of Universities, Institutions and Qualifications; Royal Decree 1002/2010 of 5 August on the award of official university qualifications; and Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for ensuring its quality. This decree updates and clarifies various aspects of the procedure for the organisation and quality assurance of university education, strengthening the coherence of the system and its alignment with European standards.

Doctoral programmes are regulated by Royal Decree 99/2011 of 28 January, regulating official doctoral programmes, and by Royal Decree 576/2023 of 4 July, amending the aforementioned Royal Decree 99/2011. In accordance with this legislation, universities' institutional strategies regarding R&D&I must place the doctoral degree at the heart of their activities, allowing for considerable flexibility and autonomy, whilst at the same time achieving high standards of quality, internationalisation, innovation, recognition and mobility. The training of research staff is, at present, a key element of a knowledge-based society.

Across the board, Organic Law 10/2022 of 6 September on the comprehensive guarantee of sexual freedom sets out, in Title III on training, the training measures necessary to ensure the specialisation of professionals with direct responsibility for the prevention and detection of sexual violence, as well as for comprehensive care, protection and justice, as one of the main safeguards for the implementation of this Organic Law. Universities and educational institutions must ensure compliance with these provisions.

The criteria for accreditation are agreed jointly by the quality agencies registered with the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU), and in accordance with international quality standards, in particular the ESG, the standards of the European Quality Assurance Register for Agencies (EQAR) and other relevant legislation.

Furthermore, academic integrity is a fundamental pillar of quality assurance. In this regard, AVAP participates in the GAIN Network (Global Academic Integrity Network), which promotes international standards for fostering academic honesty and preventing academic misconduct in higher education.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Protocol is to establish the criteria and procedure for the evaluation, prior to the renewal of accreditation, of official doctoral degrees registered in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT), to be carried out by the Valencian Agency for Evaluation and Prospective Studies (AVAP), in accordance with the conditions set out in Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for ensuring its quality, in accordance with Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and higher education institutions, and the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions, and in accordance with Royal Decree 99/2011 of 28 January, regulating official doctoral programmes, and Royal Decree 576/2023 of 4 July, amending the aforementioned Royal Decree 99/2011.

The renewal of accreditation for official university doctoral programmes must take place within a maximum of six years from the date of the initial verification by the Council of Universities, or from the date of the last follow-up or accreditation.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Protocol applies to official doctoral programmes delivered in the Valencian Community by public and private universities, including affiliated centres, which are required to undergo accreditation renewal and require an evaluation report from AVAP.

In the case of doctoral programmes involving several universities, this protocol shall apply where the administrative lead for the doctoral programme is a university belonging to the Valencian university system; that is, where it is the university that applied for and processed the verification application and which receives all correspondence and notifications relating thereto. This university, which need not necessarily be the same as the coordinating university of the doctoral programme, must notify the other universities participating in the doctoral programme of the details of this evaluation procedure.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation for the renewal of accreditation of official doctoral programmes are:

- To ensure the quality of the doctoral programme offered in accordance with the established qualification standards and the criteria set out in current legislation.

- To guarantee that the quality of the outcomes achieved during the course of the doctoral programme corresponds to the commitments made and verified by the relevant evaluation body.
- To verify that the doctoral programme has undergone an appropriate monitoring process and that the available quantitative and qualitative information has been used to analyse its progress and generate relevant proposals for improvement.
- To ensure the availability and accessibility of public, valid, reliable, pertinent and relevant information that assists students and other stakeholders in the university system, both nationally and internationally, in their decision-making.
- To provide recommendations and/or suggestions for improvement regarding the doctoral programme.

5. OUTCOME

The outcome of the evaluation process for the renewal of accreditation is a reasoned report classified as 'Favourable', 'Favourable with conditions' or 'Unfavourable', which will be submitted, amongst others, to the Council of Universities so that it may issue the appropriate decision regarding the renewal of the doctoral programme's accreditation.

6. DIMENSIONS OF THE EVALUATION

In accordance with the guidelines and procedures agreed for the accreditation renewal process for official doctoral degrees, within the framework of the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU), and bearing in mind the criteria and guidelines set out in the document 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area', the evaluation criteria established for the renewal of accreditation of doctoral programmes are organised into three dimensions:

a) PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT: The analysis focuses on those aspects of the doctoral programme's implementation that demonstrate the extent to which the institution's project is being fulfilled: the programme's continued relevance to society, academic management, the public information provided, and the degree to which its Internal Quality Assurance System has been implemented.

b) RESOURCES: The analysis focuses on the human, material and support resources available to the doctoral programme to ensure that the competences defined by the programme are achieved.

c) OUTCOMES: Aspects relating to the outcomes of the doctoral programme and student satisfaction are assessed, along with how these have evolved over the course of the programme.

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The relationship between the criteria set out in this Protocol for the renewal of accreditation of doctoral programmes in the Valencian Community and the criteria for internal quality assurance within the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)¹ is as follows:

CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION RENEWAL	ESG 2015 CRITERIA
Criterion 1. Organisation and delivery	1.2 Programme design and approval
	1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
	1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
Criterion 2. Information and transparency	1.8. Public information
Criterion 3. Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)	1.1 Quality assurance policy
	1.7 Information management
	1.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic review of programmes
	1.10 External cyclical quality assurance
Criterion 4. Academic Staff	1.5 Teaching staff
Criterion 5. Support staff, material resources and services	1.6 Learning resources and student support
Criterion 6. Learning Outcomes	1.2 Programme design and approval
	1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
Criterion 7. Satisfaction and performance indicators	1.7 Information management
	1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes
	1.10 External cyclical quality assurance

The criteria included in the three dimensions of the assessment are detailed below, with the corresponding standard and the guidelines to be taken into account when assessing whether it has been met indicated for each one.

¹ Adopted by the Conference of Ministers of Education held in Yerevan on 14 and 15 May 2015. Link to the full text: http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

DIMENSION 1. DEGREE PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Criterion 1. Organisation and Development

ESG 2015:

1.2 Programme design and approval. Institutions must have processes in place for the design and approval of their study programmes. Programmes must be designed to meet the objectives set for them, including the expected learning outcomes. The qualification level of a programme must be clearly specified, made public and must refer to the exact level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

1.3 Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment. Institutions must ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to participate actively in shaping the learning process and that their assessment reflects this student-centred approach.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification. Institutions must consistently apply pre-established and publicly available standards covering all stages of the student 'lifecycle', for example, admission, progression, recognition and certification.

AVAP Standard: The PhD programme is student-centred, up to date and has been implemented in accordance with the conditions set out in the approved programme proposal and/or any subsequent amendments thereto.

Guidelines to be assessed:

1.1 The programme has mechanisms in place to ensure that the entry profile of doctoral students is appropriate and that their numbers are consistent with the characteristics and distribution of the programme's research areas and the number of places offered.

1.2 The programme has adequate mechanisms in place for the supervision of doctoral students and, where applicable, for training activities.

1.3 The institution addresses any recommendations made in the verification report and, where applicable, in any amendment reports, as well as those that may be contained in subsequent monitoring reports.

1.4 Where applicable, changes made to the doctoral programme that have not been subject to formal amendment do not alter MECES Level 4 and allow for its updating in accordance with the requirements of the discipline.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 1.1.

- The admission criteria ensure that students possess the required entry profile to commence their studies in line with the programme's characteristics and research areas, as well as the

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number of places offered in the verified programme description and/or any subsequent amendments thereto.

- The supplementary training modules fulfil their purpose in terms of enabling students from different entry disciplines to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

Points to consider: Guideline 1.2.

- The academic committee monitors the progress of PhD students using the documents set out in Royal Decree 99/2011 (research plan and record of activities carried out by each student).
- The procedure used by the academic committee for the appointment of academic staff to supervise and direct doctoral theses, as well as for any subsequent changes to these appointments, is appropriate.
- Measures have been put in place to prevent fraud and ensure the originality of the research.
- Where the doctoral programme is delivered across several institutions and/or is inter-university in nature, the coordination arrangements between the institutions and/or universities participating in the programme.
- The university's regulations on the submission and defence of doctoral theses are in line with current national legislation.
- In the case of inter-university doctoral programmes, the regulations governing the submission and defence of the doctoral thesis set out the same requirements at all participating universities.
- In the case of an international placement, the necessary coordination and supervision of the placement at a prestigious foreign higher education institution or research centre has been ensured.
- In the case of theses under an international joint supervision arrangement, the periods of study and activities have been set out in the joint supervision agreements and are being duly carried out.
- In the case of industrial placements, the necessary coordination and supervision have been ensured so that the activities carried out within the company enable students to acquire the relevant skills.

Points to consider: Guideline 1.3.

- Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations set out in the verification report and/or in any subsequent amendments thereto, in the authorisation report, and in any subsequent follow-up reports have been implemented.

Points to consider – Guideline 1.4.

- Where applicable, the characteristics and results of changes made that have not been subject to a programme amendment report.

Criterion 2. Information and Transparency

ESG 2015:

1.8 Public information. Institutions must publish clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and easily accessible information on their activities and programmes.

Standard: Institutions must publish clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and easily accessible information on their activities and programmes.

Guidelines to be assessed:

2.1 The university publishes objective, comprehensive and up-to-date information on the doctoral programme, its characteristics, its progress and the results achieved.

2.2 The institution ensures that all stakeholders have easy access to relevant information about the doctoral programme.

2.3 The institution publishes the SAIC within which the doctoral programme is framed.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 2.1.

- The approved doctoral programme prospectus and/or any subsequent amendments to it are published on the website and are freely available.
- The final evaluation report for the accreditation process and the various reports on amendments to the PhD programme, as well as the accreditation decision by the Council of Universities, are published on the website and are freely available.
- The monitoring reports on the PhD programme produced by AVAP are published on the website and are openly accessible.
- The internal monitoring reports for the PhD programme are published on the website, albeit with restricted access.
- A direct link to the PhD programme in the Register of Universities, Centres and Qualifications is available on the website.
- The correspondence between the name of the doctoral programme as advertised and the name listed in the RUCT.
- A description of the main aspects relating to admission to the PhD programme (objectives, entry profile, exit profile, number of places available, enrolment period and procedure, admission requirements and criteria, the body responsible for the admission process and its composition, the procedure for and allocation of a supervisor and thesis director, supplementary training, and scholarships and other financial support) are published on the website and are freely accessible.

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• A description of the main aspects relating to the organisation of the PhD programme (research areas, training activities, and the procedure for drawing up and defending the research proposal) is published on the website and is freely available.
• Details of the main aspects relating to the operational planning of the PhD programme (composition of the academic committee, duration of studies and enrolment period, academic calendar and learning resources) are published on the website and are freely available.
• Details of the academic and research staff involved in the PhD programme are published on the website and are freely available
• Where applicable, details of the key aspects relating to mobility programmes (objectives, regulations, and scholarships and grants) are published on the website and are freely available.
• The academic regulations governing doctoral theses (assessment, submission and defence, international distinction, theses under international co-supervision, and industrial distinction) are published on the website and are openly accessible.
• The main outcomes of the PhD programme (defended doctoral theses and stakeholder satisfaction) are published on the website and are openly accessible.
• Where information about the doctoral programme is available on several websites belonging to the university (or universities, if it is an inter-university programme) or to the institutions offering the programme, the information does not contain any contradictions.
• Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations for improvement included in the doctoral programme's progress reports have been implemented.

Points to consider: Guideline 2.2

• The ease of access to the description of the doctoral programme.
• The ease with which pupils can access information about the skills they need to acquire.
• The ease of access to information on the entry and admission requirements for the PhD programme and, where applicable, any supplementary training that must be undertaken.
• The ease of access to information prior to enrolment (documents to be submitted, places available, etc.).
• The ease of access to information on the organisation and operational planning of the PhD programme.
• In this case, easy access to information on what the 'international specialisation', the thesis under an international co-supervision arrangement and the 'Industrial' specialisation entail.
• The ease of access to information regarding student support programmes or services and the learning resources available.
• Easy access to the regulations applicable to students on the PhD programme.
• Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations for improvement included in the doctoral programme's progress reports have been implemented.

Points to consider: Guideline 2.3.

- The Internal Quality Assurance System (SAIC), within which the PhD programme is framed and which sets out those responsible for it, the procedures and, where applicable, the improvement measures implemented, is published on the website and is freely accessible.

Criterion 3. Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)

ESG 2015:

1.1 Quality assurance policy. Institutions must have a public quality assurance policy that forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders must develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

1.7 Information management. Institutions must ensure that they collect, analyse and use information relevant to the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

1.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of programmes. Institutions must monitor and periodically evaluate their programmes to ensure that they achieve their objectives and meet the needs of students and society. Such evaluations must lead to continuous programme improvement. Consequently, any measures planned or adopted must be communicated to all stakeholders

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance. Institutions must undergo external quality assurance in accordance with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

AVAP Standard: The institution has a formally established and implemented internal quality assurance system that effectively ensures the continuous improvement of the doctoral programme.

Guidelines to be assessed:

3.1 The internal quality assurance system (SAIC) in place ensures the collection of information and results relevant to decision-making and the efficient management of the doctoral programme, particularly regarding learning outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.

3.2 The SAIC in place has procedures that facilitate the evaluation and improvement of the doctoral programme.

3.3 The implemented SAIC has appropriate procedures in place to deal with suggestions, complaints and compliments.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 3.1.

- The implemented SAIC ensures the continuous collection of information and the analysis of learning outcomes.

- The SAIC that has been implemented ensures the continuous collection of information and the analysis of results relating to employment placement.
- The SAIC system in place ensures that information is collected on an ongoing basis and that the level of satisfaction amongst the various stakeholder groups is analysed.
- Procedures for continuously collecting information, analysing the results and using them to inform decision-making and improve the quality of the PhD programme have been developed in accordance with the relevant guidelines.
- In the case of inter-university doctoral programmes, whether the measures implemented as a result of the introduction of the SAIC are coordinated across all the universities or centres participating in the programme.

Points to consider – Guideline 3.2.

- The recommendations contained in the evaluation reports for the review, modification and monitoring of the PhD programme have been analysed within the SAIC, and the relevant actions have been put in place by those responsible for the PhD programme.
- Based on an analysis of objective and reliable data, the SAIC provides information to support the processes of monitoring, modifying and accrediting the degree programme, and has generated useful information for the groups involved in the doctoral programme.
- In this case, changes have been made to the originally planned design of the doctoral programme as a result of the information provided by the SAIC, and monitoring of these changes confirms that they have been effective and have achieved the objectives set.

Points to consider – Guideline 3.3.

- The SAIC in place has appropriate procedures for dealing with suggestions, complaints and compliments.

DIMENSION 2. RESOURCES

Criterion 4. Academic staff

ESG 2015:

1.5 Teaching staff. Institutions must ensure the competence of their teaching staff. They must also use fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of their staff.

AVAP Standard: Institutions must ensure the competence of their teaching staff. They must also use fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of their staff.

Guidelines to be assessed:

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|--|
| 4.1 Academic staff meet the required academic qualification standards for participation in the doctoral programme and can demonstrate their research experience. |
| 4.2 There are sufficient academic staff, and they have the necessary time commitment to carry out their duties appropriately, taking into account the number of students in each research area and the nature and characteristics of the doctoral programme. |
| 4.3 The doctoral programme has mechanisms in place to recognise the work involved in supervision and thesis guidance. |
| 4.4 The level of participation by international experts on monitoring committees and thesis examination boards is appropriate given the programme's scientific field. |

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 4.1.

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching and research staff involved in the PhD programme and the research experience they have demonstrated. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The involvement of teaching staff in research, development and innovation activities, and the impact of these on the PhD programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to the academic staff structure during the period under review. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The extent to which the commitments set out in the audited annual report and/or subsequent amendments have been fulfilled. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations set out in the authorisation and monitoring reports for the doctoral programme have been implemented. |

Points to consider: Guideline 4.2.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The extent to which the commitments set out in the verification report and/or subsequent amendments have been fulfilled. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to the academic staff structure during the period under review. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The level of student satisfaction with the supervision they have received and the guidance provided for their theses and, where applicable, the improvement measures put in place. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations contained in the verification, authorisation and monitoring reports on the doctoral programme have been implemented. |

Points to consider: Guideline 4.3.

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PhD programme has mechanisms in place to recognise the work of supervisors, and these are appropriate. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PhD programme has mechanisms in place for the assessment of thesis supervision, and these are appropriate. |

- The level of satisfaction among academic staff with the mechanisms for recognising their work in tutoring and supervising doctoral theses.

Points to consider: Guideline 4.4.

- The extent to which the commitments set out in the verification report and/or subsequent amendments have been fulfilled.
- The level of involvement of international experts in the supervisory committees and thesis examination boards is appropriate, taking into account the programme's scientific field and the commitments set out in the verification report or any subsequent amendments.

Criterion 5. Support staff, material resources and services

ESG 2015:

1.6 Resources for learning and student support. Institutions must have sufficient funding to carry out teaching and learning activities and ensure that students are provided with sufficient and easily accessible support and resources for learning.

AVAP Standard: Institutions must have sufficient funding to carry out teaching and learning activities and ensure that students are provided with adequate and easily accessible support and resources for learning.

Guidelines to be assessed:

- 5.1 The material resources available are appropriate to the number of students in each research area and the nature and characteristics of the doctoral programme.
- 5.2 Academic guidance services and support staff meet the needs of students' training and learning process as research staff.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 5.1

- The characteristics, where applicable, of the laboratories, workshops and experimental spaces in relation to the number of students and the scheduled training activities.
- The characteristics of bibliographic and documentary resources in relation to pupil numbers and the planned educational activities.
- Where there are partner organisations participating in the research activities under an agreement, the nature of the material resources and other facilities they make available to the doctoral programme.

- The availability of financial support provided by the PhD programme or the university itself, intended to enable PhD students to attend conferences and undertake stays abroad.
- The extent to which the commitments set out in the verification report and/or subsequent amendments have been fulfilled.
- Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations contained in the verification, authorisation and monitoring reports on the doctoral programme have been implemented.

Points to consider: Guideline 5.2.

- The characteristics of academic and, where applicable, career guidance services and/or programmes.
- The extent to which the commitments set out in the verification report and/or subsequent amendments have been fulfilled.
- Where applicable, the extent to which the recommendations contained in the verification, authorisation and monitoring reports on the doctoral programme have been implemented.

DIMENSION 3. OUTCOMES

Criterion 6. Learning Outcomes

ESG 2015:

1.2 Programme design and approval. Institutions must have processes in place for the design and approval of their study programmes. Programmes must be designed to meet the objectives set for them, including the expected learning outcomes. The qualification level of a programme must be clearly specified, made public and must refer to the exact level within the national higher education qualifications framework and, consequently, to the European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.

1.3 Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment. Institutions must ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to participate actively in shaping the learning process and that student assessment reflects this student-centred approach.

AVAP standard: The learning outcomes achieved by PhD students correspond to level 4 of the MECES (Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education).

Guidelines to be assessed:

- 6.1 The teaching activities, teaching methodologies and assessment systems used are appropriate and aligned with the objective of achieving the intended learning outcomes.
- 6.2 The academic indicators of the doctoral programme and their development correspond to Level 4 of the MECES.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 6.1.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching activities and their assessment are consistent with the competences defined for the doctoral programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of doctoral theses defended and the trend in this number are appropriate for the characteristics of the doctoral programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The standards required for doctoral theses to be awarded the <i>cum laude</i> distinction. |

Points to consider: Guideline 6.2.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The doctoral theses defended and the scientific contributions derived from them – both those produced prior to their defence and those produced subsequently – demonstrate the acquisition of the core competences established by the MECES for doctoral programmes, as well as the competences and skills specific to the programme. |
|---|

Criterion 7. Satisfaction and Performance Indicators

ESG 2015:

1.7 Information management. Institutions must ensure that they collect, analyse and use information relevant to the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

1.9 Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of programmes. Institutions must monitor and periodically evaluate their programmes to ensure that they achieve their objectives and meet the needs of students and society. Such evaluations must lead to continuous programme improvement. Consequently, any measures planned or adopted must be communicated to all stakeholders.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance. Institutions must undergo external quality assurance in accordance with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

AVAP Standard: The results of the doctoral programme's indicators are appropriate to its characteristics and to the socio-economic and research context, and meet the demands of its environment through periodic evaluation.

Guidelines to be assessed:

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| 7.1 The satisfaction levels of students, teaching staff, graduates and other stakeholders are adequate. |
| 7.2 The indicators are appropriate to the student profile, in line with the programme's scientific field. |
| 7.3 The trend in the indicators is consistent with the forecasts set out in the verified annual report. |

7.4 Graduates' entry into the labour market is consistent with the programme's socio-economic and research context.

Points to consider:

Points to consider: Guideline 7.1.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reliability of the results of surveys or other methods used to assess the satisfaction of the various stakeholder groups. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders' satisfaction with the skills developed by the students. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders' satisfaction with the organisation and planning of the doctoral programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders' satisfaction with the communication channels used by the PhD programme and the content of the information it provides. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders' satisfaction with the material resources available. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders' satisfaction with academic and, where applicable, career guidance services and/or programmes. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder satisfaction with the academic indicators of the PhD programme. |

Guideline 7.2. Points to consider:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The trend in the number of new students admitted per academic year, compared with the forecasts set out in the audited annual report and/or subsequent amendments. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where applicable, the results of applying the admission criteria in relation to the intake profile set out in the verification report and/or subsequent amendments. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in the average duration of the programme and the drop-out rate, according to the programme's subject area and the context in which the doctoral programme is situated. |

Guideline 7.3. Points to consider:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The progress of the indicators for the doctoral programme in line with the forecasts set out in the approved annual report and/or subsequent amendments. |
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Guideline 7.4 Points to consider:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reliability of employability indicators. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The evolution of employability indicators in relation to the socio-economic and research context of the PhD programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where applicable, the existence of university plans, programmes and/or services designed to facilitate and enhance the employability of graduates from the doctoral programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduates' satisfaction with the link between the education they have received and their employability prospects. |

- Employers' satisfaction with the relationship between the training received by graduates on the PhD programme and their employability prospects.

7. ACCREDITATION RENEWAL PROCEDURE

In order to ensure transparency in the evaluation process for official doctoral degrees, this section describes the sequence of activities to be carried out by the various parties involved in the accreditation renewal process.

7.1. Publication of the call for applications

The Regional Ministry responsible for universities publishes one or more calls for applications each year in the Official Gazette of the Valencian Regional Government (DOGV), setting out the deadlines, the documentation to be submitted and the procedure to be followed by universities applying for the renewal of accreditation for an official doctoral degree.

7.2. Application for renewal of accreditation

In accordance with Article 34 of Royal Decree 822/2021, higher education institutions that are not institutionally accredited must renew the accreditation of their official university degrees in accordance with the established procedure, which will be decided by the Council of Universities on the basis of the mandatory and binding report from AVAP.

To initiate this procedure, the university shall submit the application to the Council of Universities via the relevant application provided by the Ministry of Universities.

The application for renewal of accreditation received will be forwarded to AVAP within a maximum of 5 working days, so that it may verify that the curriculum is being implemented in accordance with its initial plan, through an evaluation which must, in all cases, include a visit by external experts to the university, with the participation of at least one student, and which will conclude with the preparation of a mandatory evaluation report for the Council of Universities.

Once the accepted applications have been received, AVAP plans the full course of the procedure to be followed, contacting the university to request the submission of documentary evidence, as well as the timetable for the visit by the External Evaluation Committee, whilst ensuring at all times that the university has a minimum of thirty calendar days to prepare for the external evaluation visit.

7.3. Formation of the External Evaluation Committees ()

These Committees will be responsible for visiting the University and reviewing the PhD programme. AVAP will select and publish on its website the members of the External Evaluation Committees and will

inform the university of their composition, together with a brief curriculum vitae for each member. The University will have a period of five days in which to exercise, where applicable, its right to challenge, giving reasons, the members selected by AVAP.

Once this period has elapsed, AVAP will proceed with the appointment and final constitution of the relevant External Evaluation Committee, which will be composed of:

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| a) A chairperson with an academic background and experience in the verification, authorisation, monitoring or accreditation of degree programmes. |
| b) A variable number of academic and/or professional members, to be determined according to the number of degree programmes to be evaluated and the diversity of their academic fields, preferably with experience in the verification, authorisation, monitoring or accreditation of degree programmes as members of evaluation committees. |
| c) One student member, preferably from the academic field or discipline of the degree programmes to be assessed, preferably with training in evaluation processes. |
| d) One member with a technical background, who shall have experience in the implementation and operation of quality assurance systems, university management or the European Higher Education Area, and who shall act as secretary. |

The members of the External Evaluation Committee are appointed by AVAP's General Management and sign AVAP's code of ethics, undertaking to comply with its principles of independence, confidentiality, objectivity, excellence and transparency.

In general, when selecting members of the External Evaluation Committee, AVAP takes the following criteria into account:

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| • Conflict of interest: Evaluators must not have any direct connection with the university being evaluated or with its geographical area. |
| • Previous experience: It will be regarded as a positive factor if evaluators have previously participated in evaluation processes. |
| • Level of satisfaction: AVAP must not have received any justified formal complaints regarding their actions as evaluators. |
| • Geographical representation: Evaluators must come from university systems other than that of the Valencian Community. |
| • Gender parity: AVAP will endeavour to ensure that the composition of the Committee is balanced between men and women. |

7.4. Analysis of the self-assessment report and evidence for the degree programme n

Once the deadline for submitting the self-assessment report and supporting evidence, as set out in this Protocol, has passed, and once AVAP has verified that the documents have been correctly uploaded to

the evaluation platform , AVAP shall provide the External Evaluation Committee with access to the documentary evidence relating to the degree programme for the purpose of the site visit, as well as to support tools to facilitate their work, such as report templates and forms, and permanent access to the IT tool managed by AVAP.

For the assessment of the criteria and guidelines described above, the following set of preliminary documentary evidence must be provided:

• The latest version of the verified programme report, including any amendments requested by the degree programme that have been approved.
• The programme verification report and, where applicable, the modification reports.
• The annual internal monitoring reports for the degree programme.
• Evidence obtained from the Internal Quality Assurance System (SAIC).
• Certification reports on the implementation of the SAIC, if available.
• Certification reports on the implementation of assessment models for university teaching staff, such as those derived from the DOCENTIA programme.
• The self-assessment report on the doctoral programme drawn up by the university for the renewal of accreditation, through which the university demonstrates that the results achieved meet the objectives for which the doctoral programme was designed. The structure and content of this report must conform to the template set out in the annexes
• The tables and indicators detailed in the annexes

In addition to the above, the university must upload to the platform, at least one week prior to the date of the visit, all documentation relating to the 'Evidence to be provided during the visit by the External Evaluation Committee'. In the specific case of EV1 (relating to the list of doctoral theses), the External Evaluation Committee must provide the university with the list of theses at least one month before the date of the visit.

Within the same timeframe, applicants must make available to AVAP the documentation serving as the basis for the evaluation of the degree programmes, in accordance with the updated templates set out in this Protocol and via the established evaluation platform. The information must be uploaded to the platform as separate PDF files, the filenames of which must always include a reference to the corresponding evidence, to ensure that the External Evaluation Committee and the Qualifications Evaluation Committee have access to the content. Links leading to information stored in the cloud (i.e. outside the platform) will not be accepted, unless the protocol expressly states otherwise for specific evidence.

Members of the External Evaluation Committee analyse all the documentation relating to the degree programme and verify that they have all the necessary documentation to produce the evaluation report. Should they find that any evidence is missing, they must notify the AVAP technical staff responsible for this process as soon as possible.

7.5. Visit

a) Proposed agenda for the visit

In accordance with the schedule for the visit agreed between AVAP and the university, the External Evaluation Committee shall propose to the university, at least ten days in advance, an agenda for the visit specifying the date and time of the meetings to be held with the groups involved in the doctoral programme (management team, programme coordinators, academic staff, students, administrative and support staff, graduates, employers, etc.) and, where applicable, the facilities to be visited. The university must return the duly completed schedule to the External Evaluation Committee no later than one week before the visit.

Once the schedule proposed by the External Evaluation Committee has been accepted, the university shall prepare:

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| a) The infrastructure and appropriate IT equipment required to carry out the relevant tasks. |
| b) The evidence to be provided for the visit, as set out in Annex I, as well as any additional evidence requested. This evidence must be available at the start of the visit. |
| c) A list of the names of representatives from the various groups involved in the evaluation, in accordance with the External Evaluation Committee's instructions. |

b) Sharing of the individual analysis carried out

One week before the visit, the External Evaluation Committee will hold an online meeting to discuss the issues that each Committee member has individually identified through their prior analysis of the evidence. To this end, the Committee must determine the areas to be addressed during the visit, as well as:

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| 1. Identify any aspects that are unclear, contradictory or not supported by evidence. |
| 2. Identify the main issues that need to be substantiated or clarified during the visit and which, therefore, must be verified during the various hearings. |
| 3. Establish, where appropriate, any additional evidence regarding aspects of the doctoral programme's operation that require further information. |

7.6. Conduct of the visit

When setting up the External Evaluation Committee, AVAP determines whether the visit will take place in person or online.

In accordance with the schedule, the External Evaluation Committee carries out the visit (in person or online) to the institution(s) to which the doctoral programme under evaluation is affiliated. The visit lasts for a maximum of three days and may include the external evaluation of several degree programmes.

In addition to reviewing the relevant evidence and visiting the facilities, the External Evaluation Committee holds scheduled meetings with the groups involved in the degree programme (management team, programme coordinators, teaching staff, students, administrative and support staff, graduates, employers, etc.).

The university must ensure that the schedule includes a public hearing open to the entire university community. To this end, it must publicly announce this opportunity at least 15 days in advance. As a general rule, no individual may attend more than one hearing.

7.7 Report from External Evaluation

At the end of the visit, the members of the External Evaluation Committee pool their preliminary conclusions in order to draw up the External Evaluation Report. AVAP will provide the evaluators with a document setting out the aspects to be considered, which serves as a guide to help them identify which aspects must be assessed under each criterion and guideline.

Each member of the External Evaluation Committee will produce an individual report. This report must contain a detailed and reasoned analysis of the degree of compliance with each and every one of the criteria and guidelines for the renewal of accreditation, in accordance with the template provided by AVAP. This report is drawn up on the basis of the assessment of and:

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| a) The self-assessment report on the doctoral programme produced by the university. |
| b) The body of evidence provided by the university. |
| c) The visit to the facilities where each training programme is delivered, which includes interviews with those involved in the degree programme. |

Based on the individual reports, evidence and impressions gathered, the academic member of the External Evaluation Committee for the doctoral programme will coordinate the drafting of a report, which will be reviewed by each committee member so that they may contribute suggestions and proposals. The academic member will incorporate the suggestions and proposals made by all committee members and finalise the report. The chair of the Committee will review the report, sign it and submit it to AVAP within a maximum of seven days from the date of the visit .

Once AVAP's technical staff have verified that the report meets all requirements and consistently reflects the assessment of all criteria, it will be forwarded to the Qualifications Assessment Committee.

7.8 Evaluation of the doctoral programme by the Qualifications Assessment Committee

With the aim of ensuring greater objectivity and rigour in the accreditation renewal process, following the visit by the External Evaluation Committee and the publication of the External Evaluation Report, the degree programme will be evaluated by the Degree Programme Evaluation Committee, which will act by specialism and as a collegial body.

Having reviewed all the documentation contained in the doctoral programme's file, and taking into account the External Evaluation Report drawn up by the External Evaluation Committee, in accordance with Article 34.5 of Royal Decree 822/2021, the aforementioned Commission has drawn up a reasoned proposal for a report on the renewal of accreditation.

Each of the seven criteria will be assessed by the Qualifications Assessment Committee according to four levels:

'Excellent'	The standard corresponding to the criterion is fully met. Furthermore, it serves as an example that exceeds the basic requirements and demonstrates good practice.
Met	The standard corresponding to the criterion is fully met.
Partially met	The standard is met, but specific areas for improvement have been identified.
Not met	The criterion does not meet the minimum level required to meet the relevant standard.

The report must also be assessed as a whole and be properly justified, and may be:

a) In favour of renewing accreditation.
b) In favour of renewing accreditation, subject to conditions.
c) Unfavourable to the renewal of accreditation.

A report that is "Favourable" to the renewal of accreditation may contain, in relation to each of the criteria, suggested actions that contribute to achieving better quality in teaching or in the resources allocated to it; where applicable, these should be included in the box marked for this purpose as "Recommendations", which may be taken into account in future accreditations.

A '**Favourable with conditions**' report is intended for those university degree programmes that contain aspects which must necessarily be reviewed or improved. In this case, the report will contain a list of conditions. As set out in Article 28 of Royal Decree 822/2021, a follow-up assessment must be carried out three years after the effective implementation or renewal of the accreditation, with particular emphasis placed on degree programmes that have received this rating.

In the event of an "Unfavourable" report, and depending on the nature of the shortcomings observed, specific aspects that the university must amend in order to obtain a favourable report may be highlighted. Furthermore, where a degree programme is delivered at several centres (affiliated and/or associated) belonging to the same university, a proposal may be included to exclude the centre or centres where serious non-compliance has occurred, thereby preventing the issuance of a favourable report.

ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL: RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION FOR OFFICIAL DOCTORAL DEGREES IN THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY

For the purposes of this procedure, the following are considered grounds for an unfavourable accreditation report:

Deficiencies which, although requiring rectification, have not been corrected after being highlighted in the report on the verification, amendment, monitoring and/or renewal of accreditation.

Failure to fulfil clear and objective commitments set out in the verified report or in subsequent amendments thereto regarding academic staff, support staff, material resources and services.

Under no circumstances can a favourable accreditation report be obtained if a rating of 'Not met' is given for any of the following criteria:

Criterion 4. Academic staff

Criterion 5. Support staff, material resources and services

Criterion 6. Learning outcomes

The above does not preclude the possibility that, depending on the nature of the doctoral programme and its teaching and learning methods, the identification of serious shortcomings in other criteria may lead to the issuance of an 'Unfavourable' report.

In accordance with Article 34.5 of Royal Decree 822/2021, the university may submit representations within 20 working days of receiving the draft report. Where applicable, the same document shall distinguish between the content of the representations in the strict sense and the identification of simple factual, material or arithmetic errors, which may be listed at the end of the document in accordance with the following format:

NOTIFICATION OF FACTUAL ERRORS	
Factual error no. x	
Reference to the criterion and guideline in which the factual error appears and its location within the External Evaluation Report.	
Reference to the location within the file where the correct information appears	

Factual errors are defined as those that **necessarily exhibit** the following characteristics:

- 1) they are simple, basic mistakes involving names, dates, arithmetic operations or transcriptions of documents;
- 2) that the error can be identified by considering solely the information contained in the file;
- 3) that the error be obvious and clear, without the need to resort to interpretations of applicable legal provisions;
- 4) that there is no fundamental alteration to the meaning of the act (as there is no material error where its assessment involves a value judgement or requires a legal classification).

The university may provide clarifications regarding the deficiencies identified, as well as submit an improvement plan aimed at rectifying them. This improvement plan must be specific, setting out

objectives, those responsible and monitoring indicators, including a timetable for implementing the changes to be made within a period not exceeding three years.

With the exception of the improvement plan, no representations will be accepted that include aspects or information not contained in the body of prior documentary evidence on which the provisional report was based.

In the event that a doctoral programme is delivered at several centres (affiliated and/or associated) within the same university and the provisional report has proposed the removal of the centre or centres where serious non-compliance has occurred, the final report may be favourable if, in its representations, the university undertakes that, once accreditation has been renewed (where applicable), it will make the necessary amendments to the doctoral programme's prospectus to exclude that centre from delivering the degree and will apply to the Regional Ministry responsible for universities to have it removed from the programme.

Once the representations, if any, have been assessed, AVAP will propose a final report, which may be favourable or unfavourable to the renewal of accreditation, and will send it to the applicant university, the Council of Universities, the Valencian Regional Government and the Ministry of Universities.

At the same time, the report of the External Evaluation Committee will be published on the AVAP website.

7.9 Final decision on the procedure

Once the Council of Universities has received the AVAP report, it will issue the **final decision**.

If the report is favourable (or favourable with conditions), a decision granting the renewal will be issued. Should the report be unfavourable, a decision rejecting the renewal of accreditation will be issued.

The decision must state the grounds on which it is based and set out the available remedies, the administrative or judicial body to which they must be submitted, and the time limit for lodging them. If the relevant decision has not been issued by the end of the prescribed time limits, administrative silence shall be deemed to constitute approval.

The Council of Universities shall notify the university applying for the doctoral programme of the decision to renew or not to renew accreditation within three working days of its approval, and shall communicate this to the Valencian Regional Government, AVAP and the Ministry of Universities.

In the event that a degree programme's accreditation is not renewed, the doctoral programme shall be declared 'to be phased out', and a corresponding entry shall be made in the RUCT to that effect. Consequently, the Valencian Regional Government shall determine the phased phasing out of the programme's curriculum, on an annual basis, from the academic year following that in which the

mentioned decision was taken, and shall declare its definitive termination when this occurs for the purposes of its registration in the RUCT.

In any event, both the Valencian Regional Government and the university, within the scope of their respective powers, must take the appropriate measures to safeguard the academic rights of students currently enrolled on these programmes.

8. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

The complaints and appeals procedure allows an institution that has undergone a review process by AVAP to express its dissatisfaction with the conduct of the process or with those carrying it out (complaints procedure) or to challenge the formal outcome, that is, the renewal decision (appeals procedure).

Details of the **complaints procedure** can be found on the AVAP website at <https://avap.es/es/avap-informa/sugerencias-quejas-y-gradecimientos/>

Responsibility for responding to complaints, suggestions and/or expressions of gratitude lies with the Head of AVAP's Directorate-General, as the body in charge. The processing of complaints, suggestions and/or expressions of gratitude shall be the responsibility of the Head of the Higher Education Quality Service, or the Economic Management, Personnel and Regulatory Affairs Service, in respect of those matters affecting units and services falling within their remit.

Once a complaint, suggestion and/or expression of thanks has been submitted, the body responsible for handling it will open an information file and carry out the enquiries and procedures it deems appropriate. Among the actions to be taken, it must obtain the relevant information from the unit or service directly affected.

With regard to the **appeals procedure**, the university may challenge the formal outcome of the process, that is to say, the final decision on the renewal of accreditation issued by the Council of Universities. In accordance with Article 34.9 of Royal Decree 822/2021, the university may lodge a complaint with the Presidency of the Council of Universities within 15 days of receiving the Council of Universities' decision; this will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 26.10 of this Royal Decree.

If the appeal is accepted for consideration, it must be assessed by the Council of Universities' Appeals Committee for the Verification and Accreditation of Study Programmes. The Committee shall be composed of academic and professional experts who have not previously participated in the evaluation process.

The Commission may refer the case file to AVAP, in light of any issues identified that warrant further assessment. Once the AVAP report has been received, the Commission will draw up a proposal

for a decision, which it will forward to the Standing Committee of the Council of Universities for a final decision.

Within AVAP, the collegiate body responsible for issuing the report referred to in the previous paragraph is the Protocols and Appeals Committee.

The members of the Protocols and Appeals Committee are appointed by the AVAP Directorate-General and sign the AVAP Code of Ethics, undertaking to comply with its principles of independence, confidentiality, objectivity, excellence and transparency.

The Protocols and Appeals Committee is composed of:

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| a) A chairperson with a legal background and experience in the verification, authorisation, monitoring or accreditation of degree programmes |
| b) A variable number of academic and/or professional members, with experience in university quality assurance processes, preferably from the field of legal studies. |
| c) A student member with training in assessment processes. |
| d) A secretary with a technical background attached to AVAP, who has a voice but no vote. |

Once the procedure has been concluded, the Council of Universities shall notify the RUCT of the decision regarding the accreditation renewal procedure, so that the successful renewal or non-renewal of said accreditation may be incorporated into the degree's file. The relevant decision shall bring the administrative proceedings to a close in accordance with the provisions of Article 114.1.b) of Law 39/2015 of 1 October. If the relevant decision on the appeal has not been issued by the end of the prescribed time limits, the appeal may be deemed to have been dismissed.

A university whose official degree programme has not applied for renewal of accreditation within the relevant time limit or which, having done so, has not obtained such renewal, may not, for the following two years from the date on which the degree's accreditation expired, submit a curriculum report for a new verification process if that curriculum is similar in name and fundamental content to the curriculum of the degree for which accreditation has not been renewed.

9. REVISION CONTROL

Edition	Date	Description of the amendment
V.3.	01/07/2024	Start of version control for the document Changes: - The timeframe within which the university must return the final agenda to the External Evaluation Committee has been amended: it is now a maximum of one week before the visit. - The procedure for reporting factual errors has been amended to include it as part of the appeals process. - The deadlines for submitting the evidence to be provided during the External Evaluation Committee's visit have been specified. - The deadlines for sending and confirming the visit agenda have been amended. - The procedure has been amended so that the External Evaluation Committee's report will be published on the AVAP website once the final report has been notified.
V.4.	1 July 2025	- Reference is made to <i>Organic Law 10/2022 of 6 September on the comprehensive guarantee of sexual freedom</i>. - Point 7.4: it is expressly stipulated that evidence must be uploaded to the designated platform and, at the same time, that it is prohibited to do so via links to cloud storage.
V.5	1 July 2026	- A reference to AVAP's participation in the GAIN network is included. - A reference to Royal Decree 905/2025 of 7 October is included in the introduction to the document. - Reference is made to Royal Decree 576/2023 of 4 July, amending Royal Decree 99/2011. - The language has been adapted to reflect a gender-sensitive perspective throughout the document. - The reference to AVAP has been amended by removing the article 'la' preceding it. - The documents to be provided as a "set of preliminary documentary evidence" by the university or educational institution have been updated. - In section "8. Complaints and Appeals Procedure", the website address and the name of AVAP's services have been updated.



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