



→ AGAE self-evaluation report 2008

* according to the ENQA European Model



Agencia Andaluza de Evaluación
CONSEJERÍA DE INNOVACIÓN, CIENCIA Y EMPRESA

AGAE Self-evaluation report. 2008

Agencia Andaluza de Evaluación

Consejería de Innovación, Ciencia y Empresa. Junta de Andalucía

Avda. Al Nasir 3, 3º 2, 14006 Córdoba

Tfn.: 957 35 50 26

www.agae.es

evaluacionENQA.agae@juntadeandalucia.es



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* (Introduction)



The University System of the Autonomous region of Andalusia consists of ten public universities with a total student enrolment of 223,511 for the academic year 2007-08. The total number of equivalent full time teaching staff and researchers is 17,087, which gives a ratio of 13 students per teacher. This total figure includes 9,126 tenured professors and 7,961 tenured-track and non-tenured lecturers. In addition, there are 8,480 administrative and services support staff.

A few years after the University System was transferred from the National Government to the Autonomous Regional Government of Andalusia, efforts were initiated to develop a quality assurance system for the Region. Such efforts led in 1998 to the establishment of a Consortium for Quality Assurance of the University System in Andalusia (UCUA) (Resolution of November 8th, 1998 in —BOJA February 16th, 1999). UCUA was created as a consortium between the Regional Ministry of Science and Education (which later on, in 2003 would become the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise —CICE) and the Public Universities in Andalusia, with the mission to promote quality improvement in Andalusian Universities through its main instrument, the institutional assessment of quality.

The Spanish Universities Act (Spanish University Act 6/2001, December 21st) brought in significant changes in legislation in the regional Autonomous Communities with the introduction of mechanisms to promote academic excellence through a new quality system that emphasized features such as being objective, independent and transparent, and which provided the assurance of merit and capability in teaching staff selection and promotion, and quality improvement in all other areas of university activity. In 2003, a reform of the framework legislation concerning Spanish Universities led to legislative changes proposed by the Autonomous Regional Government that affected UCUA.

The Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd —LAU), which was embedded into the basic framework defined by the national Spanish Universities Act, expanded on the jurisdiction of the government of Andalusia over higher education and research. The new Andalusian Act created AGAE (Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia) in 2005 and indicated that UCUA would be integrated in the new AGAE. The 2005 legislation (Decree 1/2005, January 11th —BOJA 9, January 14th, 2005) defined AGAE as the main instrument for quality promotion and assurance, to be carried out through assessment, process certification and the accreditation of learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System and within the framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The new AGAE incorporated the legacy of the UCUA consortium, but had a different legal status, an administrative autonomous agency of the Government of Andalusia, with full legal personality and capacity, and its own assets with which it carries out its functions which were extended in the fields of institutional quality assessment and teaching staff and research evaluation.

The Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law of December 3rd, 2007 will bring in new significant changes to the current situation as it provides the basic organisation of the Andalusian Knowledge System. The new Law incorporates the AGAE into an independent, public corporation under a different name (Andalusian Knowledge Agency – AKA). The new AKA will have two separate parts: one, will maintain the same functions as those currently developed by AGAE, while the other will develop activities in the fields of promotion and funding of University activities, and of research projects. The new AKA is to be established sometime in 2009, and all its actions will also be based on the principles of independence, objectivity, transparency, efficiency, distance and fairness.

The AGAE is headed by a Board of Directors (Consejo Rector) and an executive director, and its operations are carried out through three committees with delegated functions in the following areas: Higher Education (HEA); Research, Development and Innovation (RDIA); and Management. There is also an Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee composed of the executive director, individuals from the former three committees and a group of external advisors that validate and ratify decisions made under the AGAE's

functions (this committee could also be identified as a *Quality Assessment Committee* as it guarantees quality assurance throughout the Agency's functions).

The Board of Directors is the governing body of AGAE. It is made up of the Regional Minister of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (President), the executive director of AGAE (Vice-president), five members proposed independently by the Andalusian Board of Universities, three members from AGAE's organizational structure and the secretary general. The Board's main functions are to approve the annual activities agenda and the economic balance sheet, and to establish and control the Agency's strategic goals according to the Andalusian University Act.

The Director of AGAE is the Agency's Executive Director and representative of the Board of Directors regarding the implementation of agreements adopted by the Board. The executive director's main functions are to supervise the attainment of the agency's goals, to represent AGAE at the institutional level, and to brief Government on the Agency's activity. The executive director is appointed by the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise among 'individuals of recognized prestige' in university and research circles for a period of four years, on a renewable basis.

There are currently fourteen staff employees working full time at AGAE.

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* (Approach to the Review)



In May 2005, the Ministers for Education of the countries in the Bologna Process adopted *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. These require periodic external review of an external quality assurance agency's activities. Given that there is currently no national regulation for external review of quality assurance agencies for higher education in Spain, a request was made by AGAE for the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) to be responsible for the external evaluation of the Agency. Furthermore, the review will evaluate the extent to which AGAE fulfils the standards for ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration on whether AGAE's Full Membership in ENQA is to be reconfirmed.

In addition to the European context, the review also aims at providing feedback on AGAE's role and tasks in the context of the Andalusian Knowledge System. As indicated earlier, AGAE is the main instrument for quality promotion and assurance, to be carried out through assessment, process certification and the accreditation of learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System. Thus, AGAE's teaching staff assessment programme and research grants evaluation procedures are distinctive programmes whose review would be useful to determine their effectiveness and whether they meet the set aims.

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ENQA originally suggested that the *Higher Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland* (HETAC) would organise the review of AGAE's performance under the European Standards and Guidelines. However, some unforeseen events have caused HETAC to withdraw as the external examiner agency. At present, ENQA itself has become responsible for the external evaluation of AGAE under the direction of Mr. Puirseil, former Chief Executive of HETAC, who had already worked in the preparation of this review. The terms of reference for the review were published in July 2008.

The review consists of (i) a self-evaluation, the results of which are summarised in this report, followed by (ii) external review (including a site visit) by an expert panel, which will result in a report. ENQA will consider the report and issue its plans for the implementation of any changes in policies and processes arising from the review. On foot of the panel findings AGAE will determine its plans to implement the panel's recommendations. The self-evaluation summary (this document), the panel report and AGAE's implementation plans will be published on AGAE's website.

AGAE considered other similar agencies' documented experiences of self-evaluation and external review and consulted with stakeholders on the matter. It is important to highlight that; the period under review has been one of transition, based on the terms of the legislation and on the adaptation for the EHEA within Andalusian Universities. Thus, this is a valuable document in the long term for the self-evaluation to infer an assessment of AGAE's general approach.

Operationally speaking, AGAE has appointed an *Internal Evaluation Committee* composed of the Director of AGAE (Chairperson in the internal evaluation committee), Heads from the three specialised areas committees and a working group of AGAE's staff members for the elaboration of the self-evaluation report. Approval of the self-evaluation report was given by the Board of Directors in July 9th, 2008.

Sources of Information

Archival material

The Agency has extensive records, including those inherited from the UCUA. Records include those relating to policies and decisions of the Agency and documentation of quality assurance activities at programme and institutional level. Summaries of activities are found in the annual reports of the Agency and the UCUA previously. The archives also include reports prepared at various stages to evaluate aspects of the AGAE's activities.

Public consultation

To promote transparency in the review process AGAE invited public submissions to its self-evaluation. These were invited through its website and through an email with a short survey shot to the stakeholders and providers on their mailing list. The Service Letter published by Resolution of June 9th, 2008 in BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008 has also given the change to submit their comment to AGAE's stakeholders.

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Analysis of Stakeholder Submissions

This analysis focuses on the overall results of a survey undertaken to stakeholders and providers with the purpose of getting some feedback about the level of satisfaction they have across a range of AGAE functions. Specific comments from stakeholders about individual functions are dealt with in subsequent sections of the self-evaluation report.

Government departments with jurisdiction over universities, quality technical units from universities, and university teaching staff and researchers are the main direct clients of AGAE. Panel experts were also included in the survey as their feedback is also important to assess the Agency performance.

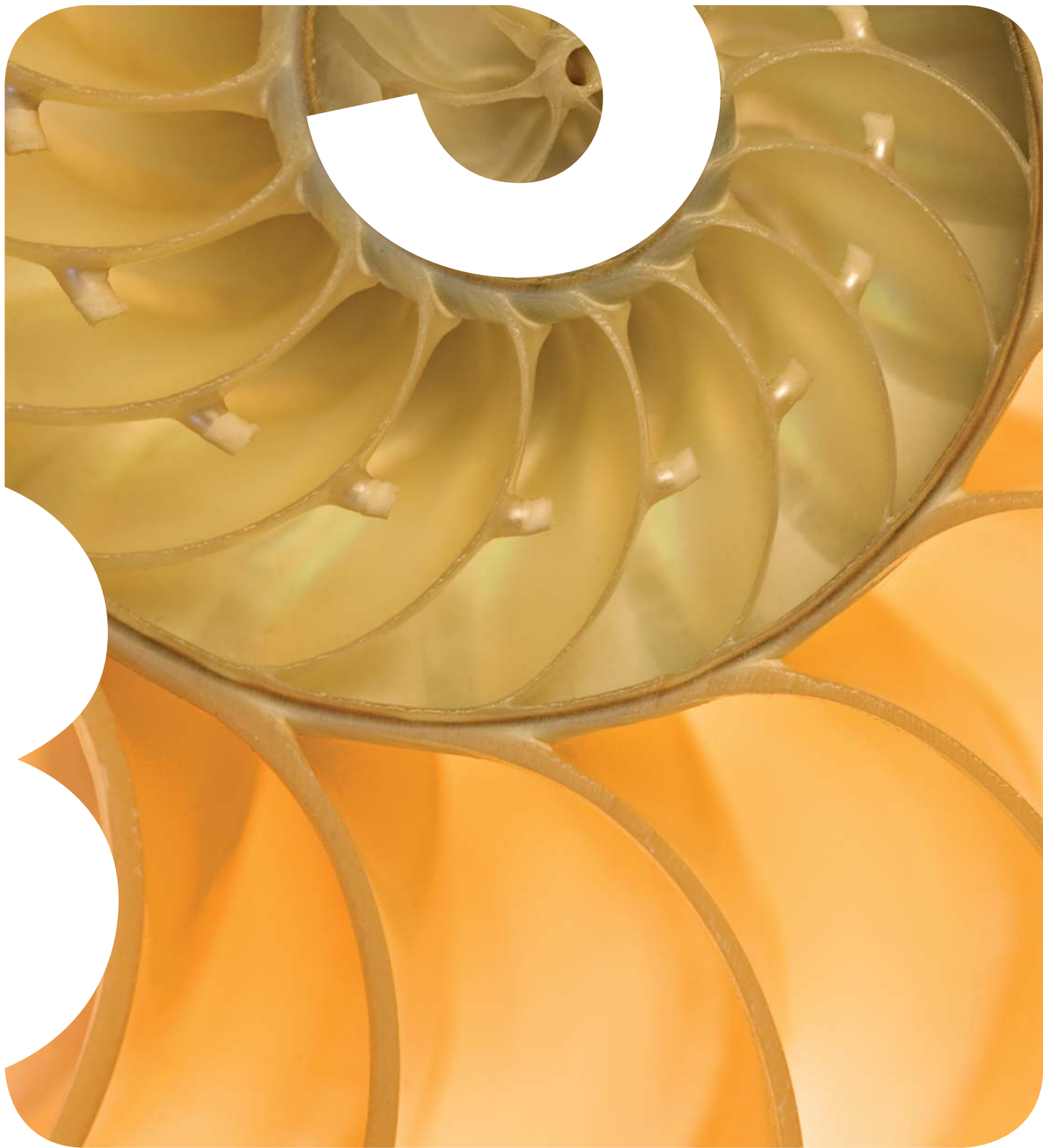
The questionnaire included a short number of questions that try to measure the degree to which stakeholders believe the Agency is fulfilling the principles of independence, objectivity, transparency, efficiency, distance and fairness (Aggregate results are shown in an independent document in the evidence pack). Questionnaires were sent to approximately 11,000 stakeholders with 1,782 responses (16.2% response rate). Until now, AGAE did not have a formal external feedback mechanism. This pilot experience has served to find out the extent to which the

Agency is known among their users and the level of satisfaction with its functioning. The experience has convinced the Agency to make greater efforts to set up follow-up questionnaires mandatory.

Overall users and providers consider that the service offered by AGAE is effective, transparent, consistent, systematic, fair and very supportive with 68.2% of respondents reporting themselves as overall very highly satisfied.



* (Background and current state of
Higher Education
and Research and Quality Assurance
in Andalusia)



The Andalusian University System: structure and figures

The role played by the Andalusian University System is essential for the economic and social development of the region. Universities in Andalusia are responsible for guarantying quality in education, promoting research and innovation, facilitating technology transfer, and encouraging entrepreneurship. They are also accountable for educating in democratic values, and promoting international cooperation and cultural development. It must be emphasised that Andalusian universities are ultimately responsible for ensuring the effective convergence of our university system with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Competences concerning the governance of the University System were transferred from the National Government to the autonomous region of Andalusia by RD 1734/86 of June 13th, 1986. Since then, the Autonomous Government of Andalusia is in charge of managing the Andalusian University System within the 1983 National Law that gives ample autonomy to public universities. The *Innovation and Modernisation Scheme for Andalusia* (PIMA), put in place in 2005, gave the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise the competence to achieve a level of excellence in the university activities of teaching, research and technology, and knowledge transfer so as to increase their competitiveness within Europe. The Andalusian Board of Universities¹ (CAU) was then established to serve as a consulting body to the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise on university issues. Regional government's decisions must be approved by the CAU. Equally, civil society is represented at university level through the Social Council (CS) which helps building up an open and committed university system.

Some statistics

The university system of the Autonomous region of Andalusia consists of ten public universities including University of Almeria (UAL), University of Cadiz (UCA), University of Cordoba (UCO), University of Granada (UGR), University of Huelva (UHU), University of Jaen (UJA), University of Malaga (UMA), University of Seville (USE), University of Pablo de Olavide (UPO), and the International University of Andalusia with headquarters both in Huelva and Baeza (Jaen), Malaga and Seville.

Public universities in Andalusia offered 123 different degrees for the Academic year 2007-2008 with 52 being undergraduate programs only, 50 both undergraduate and graduate programs and 21 only post-graduate degrees.

Furthermore, during this academic year (2007-08) there has been a significant change in the organization of postgraduate education and training (Master's and PhD's degrees) of recognised and accredited standards, with regional characteristics and inter-university collaboration. The whole system, as in the rest of Spain, is currently under changes to conform to the Bologna recommendations. Most of these modifications are in the direction followed by other countries in the European Union and they tend, among other objectives, to adapt to social and business demands to guarantee students' insertion into the labour market.

¹ The Andalusian Board of Universities is composed of representatives from the different Andalusian universities (20), Regional Parliament Representatives (4), and four members from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise. The Director of AGAE also sits in the CAU.

The total student enrolment at graduate and post-graduate levels was 223,511 for the academic year 2007-08. The total number of equivalent full time teaching staff and researchers is 17,087, which gives a ratio of 13 students per teacher. This total figure includes 9,126 tenured professors and 7,961 tenured-track and non-tenured lecturers. In addition, there are 8,480 administrative and services support staff.

By gender, the number of female students is significantly above male ones with 123,965 female students vs. 99,546 male ones. By nationality, Andalusian universities registered a total of 4,674 foreign students in 2007-08, mostly located at the Universities of Granada and Malaga.

Further details about the structure of the different universities in 2007 are given in the table below.

Table 1. The Andalusian University System: Structure and Figures

	ALMERIA	CADIZ	CORDOBA	GRANADA	HUELVA	JAEN	MALAGA	PABLO DE OLAVIDE	SEVILLE	ANDALUSIA
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	10,949	18,718	17,419	54,105	9,853	14,497	32,304	8,916	56,750	223,511
PERCENTAGE	4.90%	8.40%	7.80%	24.20%	4.40%	6.50%	14.50%	4.00%	25.40%	100%

ACADEMIC STAFF

	ALMERIA	CADIZ	CORDOBA	GRANADA	HUELVA	JAEN	MALAGA	PABLO DE OLAVIDE	SEVILLE	TOTAL
Research and Teaching staff (PDI)	844	1,652	1,371	3,547	897	1,037	2,419	837	4,308	16,912
I.1- P.D.I. tenured	516	893	777	2,157	419	542	1,399	157	2,264	9,124
Full Professors	50	97	151	362	40	53	195	44	406	1,398
Associate Professors	332	472	482	1,566	227	309	866	95	1,457	5,806
College Lecturers	130	320	122	204	145	178	323	18	390	1,830
Technicians	2	1	20	25	7	2	-	-	11	68
Others	2	3	2	-	-	-	15	-	-	22
I.2- P.D.I. Non-tenure	328	759	594	1,390	478	495	1,020	680	2,044	7,788

ADMINISTRATION (STAFF MEMBERS)

FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
5,303	3,177	8,480

Andalusia has a great opportunity to position itself in the new **Knowledge and Information Society** by assuming, as the most developed countries around us are doing, innovation as a key factor of progress. Within this framework, the Andalusian Agency for Quality Assurance is in charge of quality assurance amongst those institutions dedicated to the generation and transmission of knowledge. In this endeavour, the AGAE's responsibility extends to all parts of the Andalusian system of innovation other than the **universities** themselves such as Andalusian **research groups** and **research institutes**. The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme (*Plan Andaluz de I+D+I* or *PAIDI* 2007-2013) is one of the programmes devoted to stimulate scientific and technological development in the research field. We will come back to it in the following section.

Research in Andalusia

Research has played an increasing role in the academic life of many universities and research institutes of Andalusia with considerable improvements made on this matter. The recently approved *Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law* of the 3rd December 2007 provides the basic organisation of the Andalusian Knowledge System and is the most recent example of the efforts made from the autonomic government of Andalusia to ensure quality of research. In this sense, this new legislation encourages and reinforces technology transfer, cooperation between the public system of R+D+I and companies, and the creation of companies related to the university sector (spin-off). This is done by supporting and financing R+D+I projects and the creation of technologically-based companies that guarantee sustainable development.

As mentioned in the previous section, together with the *Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law*, the *Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme* (*Plan Andaluz de I+D+I* or *PAIDI*) has earmarked more than 25,400 million euros into the system for the period 2007-2013 to stimulate scientific and technological development in the research and business fields. A development that is capable of intensifying the most successfully wealth-creating areas such as the technological sector. In this project, AGAE is responsible for designing the assessment model and the standards and criteria of quality applicable to R+D+I projects to be financed under this scheme, with special emphasis on assessing:

- ✱ Performance criteria of research personnel, introducing the concept of applied research results as an evaluation criterion.
- ✱ R+D+I grant proposals according to the quality, capacity and viability of achieving objectives set ex ante and ex post.
- ✱ Scientific results attained by the Technological Agents determined in the Regional Plan, PAIDI.
- ✱ Research groups' performance according to the scientific and technological results obtained.

The Andalusian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research (AGAE)

The Andalusian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research (AGAE) was set up in 2005 with the overall purpose to promote quality improvement in Andalusian universities. The Agency main instrument for achieving its mission is the institutional assessment of quality, although big efforts are also made towards the promotion of quality research.

The Agency is headed by a Board of Directors (Council) consisting of eleven members. The Board is assisted by an executive direction. The Executive Director is appointed by the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise among 'individuals of recognized prestige' in university and research circles for a period of four years, on a renewable basis.

The Board of Directors is made up of the Regional Minister of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (President), the executive director of AGAE (Vice-president), five members proposed independently by the Andalusian Board of Universities, three members from AGAE's organizational structure and a secretary general (see Table 2 below). The Board's main functions are to approve the annual activities agenda and the economic balance sheet, and to establish and control the Agency's strategic goals according to the Andalusian University Act.

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Table 2. Composition of the Board of Directors 2008

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
President	<i>Mr. Francisco Vallejo Serrano, Regional Minister of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE).</i>
Vice President	<i>Dr. Elías Fereres Castiel, Director of AGAE.</i>
Members	
Proposed for the Andalusian Board of Universities (CAU)	
	<i>Dr. Miguel Casas Gómez. UCA.</i>
	<i>Dr. Juan Antonio Devesa Alcaraz. UCO.</i>
	<i>Dr. Eduardo Fernández Camacho. USE.</i>
	<i>Dr. Raimundo García del Moral Garrido. UGR.</i>
	<i>Dr. Jesús Salvador Gómez Sala. UMA.</i>
From the AGAE Organisational Structure	
	<i>Dr. José Manuel Esteve Zarazaga. UMA.</i>
	<i>Dr. José María Vega Piqueres. USE.</i>
	<i>Dr. Ana M^a Troncoso González. USE.</i>
Secretary-General	<i>Dr. M^a Teresa Sánchez Pineda de las Infantas. UCO.</i>

The Executive Director of AGAE is a representative of the Board of Directors regarding the implementation of agreements adopted by the Board. The executive direction has established three committees with delegated functions in the following areas: **Higher Education (HEA); Research, Development and Innovation (RDIA); and Management**. They meet as many times as necessary each year to assist the executive director's decisions and exercise delegated powers. Lastly, there is an **Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation** Committee composed of the executive director, individuals responsible for the different specialized area committees and a group of external experts to validate and ratify decisions made under the AGAE's functions.

The AGAE has up to thirteen **coordinators of scientific committees** according to different areas of expertise (see Table 3). These experts' mission is to advice on the different functions of the Agency regarding technical matters relative to the accreditation, evaluation and certification of higher education and of research. They support the decision making process by identifying and contacting panel experts (all from outside Andalusia), summarizing the results of the different panels, providing advice and making final assessment when necessary and overall, ensuring that the different procedures are followed in a coherent way so as to guarantee quality and efficiency in the process.

Table 3. Coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees

<i>Dr. Pilar Ballarín Domingo. Education. UGR.</i>
<i>Dr. Francisco Domingo Poveda. Natural Resources. CSIC.</i>
<i>Dr. Ignacio González Loscertales. Mechanical and Civil Engineering. UMA.</i>
<i>Dr. Manuel Herrero Sánchez. Arts and Humanities. UPO.</i>
<i>Dr. Luis Manuel Hinojosa Martínez. Legal Science. UGR.</i>
<i>Dr. Íñigo Molina Fernández. Telecommunications Engineering. UMA.</i>
<i>Dr. M^a Nieves Pascual Soler. Philology, Linguistics and Literature. UJA.</i>
<i>Dr. Pedro José Pérez Romero. Chemistry . UHU.</i>
<i>Dr. Emiliano Ruiz Barbadillo. Economics, Sociology and Law. UCA.</i>
<i>Dr. Mercedes Siles Molina. Mathematics and Physics. UMA.</i>
<i>Dr. Juan José Toledo Aral. Health Sciences. USE.</i>
<i>Dr. Miguel Toro Bonilla. Computer Science & Engn. USE.</i>
<i>Dr. Pablo J. Zarco Tejada. Agricultural and Food Engineering. CSIC.</i>

The AGAE has also a legal advisor in charge of providing advice on how to deal with the legislative changes, and with appeals that are processed through the common courts of justice. In addition, there are currently 14 full-time staff employees.

AGAE Strategic Plan 2008-2010

The Agency has been given an important role as controller and promoter of quality in relation to higher education and research in Andalusia. In order to perform this function to the advantage of Andalusian Knowledge System, it was necessary for the Agency to plan carefully how to best organize the work in a long-term perspective. Therefore, there was a need for a well-considered Strategic Plan.

Work on the Strategic Plan started in February 26th, 2008 after the Board of Directors had been informed. The Agency together with experts from two academic departments from the University of Seville and the University of Pablo de Olavide began a state-of-the art process for developing a Strategic Plan for AGAE. The Agency employees have been active in the process and made substantial contributions to the final result. Quality assurance shall be based on the appropriate definition of the different tasks for which each employee or group of employees are responsible. This provides a good starting point for using the Strategic Plan in the short-term work. The process lasted four months.

The strategic plan was established for the timeframe 2008-2010. An annual assessment will be undertaken of the need for changes in the plan on the basis of changing circumstances and general trends in society. The strategic plan will serve as the foundation for the annual activity plans elaborated each year. The annual activity plans will also show the prioritisation of AGAE tasks at any given time. The strategic plan is an aid for following up the expectations and tasks that the regional authorities assigned to AGAE when it was established.

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The Strategic Plan objectives, in line with the Agency's main functions, are related to the quality assurance and quality enhancement of higher education and research in Andalusia.

The Agency shall serve to create public trust in the quality of Andalusian higher education and research. The Agency's main functions shall be carried out in a correct and efficient manner, with good information and dialogue with the parties that are involved. To do so, the main Strategic Plan objectives can be summarize as follows:

- ★ Establish and develop high-quality and efficient support functions that contribute to the achievement of the established activities. Emphasis shall be placed on being flexible, sharing knowledge and competencies and ensuring that resources are used in an appropriate and justifiable manner. The competencies, commitment, values and attitudes of the employees are crucial for realizing the vision and meeting the goals of AGAE's activities.
- ★ AGAE shall openly and deliberately offer easily accessible in-

formation about its own activities. The Agency's information shall be correct and perceived as relevant. In today's media society, AGAE must have a proactive approach to communication in order to reach the public.

- * AGAE must participate in national and international cooperation on evaluation and accreditation of institutions, and research projects. This cooperation increases knowledge about other regions or countries' educational and research systems and methods for quality assurance, which creates trust between the countries and forms a good platform for mutual recognition.
- * Lastly, efforts have to be made to develop appropriate and efficient quality assurance procedures for the continuous enhancement of quality. Regarding *institutional assessment*, the evaluation should be based on documentation from the institution's own quality assurance system, supplemented with other main documents from the institution and information collected through interviews, expert panels, and from public data sources. The evaluation should follow internationally recognized principles. A fixed procedure description shall provide quality assured and comparable evaluation processes. Within this framework the evaluation shall have a dynamic character so that the processes can be influenced by the findings that are made. Systematic feedback from involved parties (institution and experts) is included in the procedure. In order to achieve consistent evaluations, carried out with a high degree of system competence, all committees shall be appointed from a permanent group of experts who will be selected on the basis of their personal competence and actively prepared for their task. Similar procedures shall be applied to *research evaluation*.

The full Strategic Plan document is available upon request.

4 *

* (AGAE Functions and European Standards and Guidelines)



The *National Organic University Law 6/2001*, December 21st (Title V) and the *Regional Andalusian University Law* established the legislative and legal framework for the activities that AGAE may carry out. It specifically defines the aim of AGAE as being the *assessment, accreditation and certification of quality within the terms of reference of the universities and higher education institutions in Andalusia*. More specifically, the original Agency's functions, defined before the launching of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Business (CICE) were described in Decree 1/2005 -BOJA 9, January 14th, 2005. Article 6 of this Law indicates that the AGAE is to undertake the following functions, as listed textually from the Decree:

- a. Assessing activities, programmes, services and management offered by universities and higher education institutions.
- b. Assessing research, development and innovation undertaken within the Andalusian System of R+D+I.
- c. Evaluating university teaching leading to obtaining academic degrees offered by universities and higher education institutions.
- d. Assessing teaching institutions in Andalusia offering education programs linked to obtaining foreign higher education qualifications.
- e. Assessing centres, departments, management and other services within Centres and University Institutes.
- f. Certifying the quality standards in degree courses, their management and activities held in universities.
- g. Certifying evaluating systems and procedures for assuring quality in universities, in particular, those related to the assessment of teaching functions carried out by the teaching staff in universities (public and private) and higher education centres.
- h. Accrediting education programmes linked to obtaining own academic degrees (non-official) offered by universities and higher education institutions.
- i. Assessing teaching, research and management activities of teaching staff in Public and Private Universities prior to contracting tenure-track and collaborating lecturers.
- j. Assessing teaching, research and management activities developed by teaching staff in Public and Private Universities to issue relevant reports for renewing tenure-track and collaborating positions in accordance with Article 40.1 of the Andalusian Universities Law 15/2003, dated December 22.
- k. Assessing teaching, research and management activities developed by teaching staff in Public Universities –working under contract or after having sat public examination- to designate additional salary rewards.
- l. Assessing teaching, research and management activities developed by teaching staff in Private Universities in accordance

with the Articles 31.2c) and 72 of the National Organic Law of Universities 6/2001, dated December 21.

m. Issuing assessment reports on research activities carried out by researchers individually and research groups within the Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme.

n. Issuing reports for the 'setting up' and/or evaluation of the research activity carried out by University and Research Institutes in accordance with Article 62.3) and 62.4) of the Andalusian Universities Law.

o. Participating in the establishment of evaluating systems and procedures for assuring quality in universities, and improving the university system at regional, national, European and international levels.

p. Establishing cooperation and collaboration bonds between other regional, national and international agencies in the accreditation of official and recognised degrees offered by universities and higher education centres.

q. Assessing the educative administration, universities and other institutions on their own functions.

r. Advising the Andalusian Board of Universities and in the establishment of Improvement Plans and their 'follow-up' within universities and higher education institutions.

s. Issuing assessment reports to the regional government department with competences concerning the governance of the University System, informing about the adaptation of the Andalusian University and Research System to the current teaching needs and social demands.

t. Issuing assessment reports on technology transfer developed by researchers individually, and research groups upon demand.

u. Other functions conferred on the Agency by Law 15/2003, dated December 22nd, of Andalusian Universities, these Statutes and other legislation currently in force.

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Because the Decree was elaborated by a Government prior to the launching of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Business (CICE), several of the functions listed above were not fully implemented in practice, while new functions were demanded by the new Government from AGAE. The current functions, based on the original mandate received by AGAE can be listed as follows:

Evaluation of Institutional quality

1. Evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions. The assessment of departments, centres, degrees, services, etc.
2. Assessment of proposals for the new Postgraduate Programmes of Andalusian Public Universities (MSc. and PhD.).

Assessment of university teaching staff

- 3. Teaching Staff Accreditation: Assessment of teaching and research activities of temporary staff to report to the Universities for their long term hiring (i.e. Tenure-track and collaborating lecturers).
- 4. Emeritus Professors Evaluation.
- 5. Docentia: Teaching performance assessment. In 2007, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia and the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA) signed an agreement of collaboration for the development of the DOCENTIA program, a program for the evaluation of teaching quality. In this program all of the Andalusian Universities (except for the University of Seville) are involved and have worked in a common model for the evaluation of the Andalusian University Teaching staff. The AGAE has been a key facilitator in organizing meetings, training courses, and workshops for the universities. AGAE has also assessed universities in preparing the final protocols for the teaching staff evaluation.
- 6. Other teaching staff assessment and evaluation: Good teaching performance incentives (i.e. additional salary rewards).

Evaluation of Research Programmes, groups and initiatives

- 7. Research Projects Assessment and Evaluation.
- 8. Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI Groups.
- 9. Other Research Activities Evaluation: Research Incentives.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of AGAE’s performance of these programmes is subsumed under the relevant European standards in this self-evaluation report.

A summary with the level of accomplishment of some these programmes can be found in the following tables (For further details see Annual Report 2005, 2006 and 2007 in the evidence pack).

Table 4. Evaluation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions

UNITS	Submitted to Evaluation					Evaluated				
	2002*	2003*	2004*	2005	2006	2002*	2003*	2004*	2005	2006
Official Degree Programmes	65	60	51	48	19	48	44	49	43	18
Departments	26	21	19	15	17	20	13	15	13	12
Services	20	15	25	43	56	17	10	12	35	41
Libraries	9	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
Other Degree Programmes	6	0	2	0	7	0	0	0	0	15

*UCUA

Table 5. Assessment of postgraduate programmes

UNIVERSITY	Postgraduate Programmes submitted to assess	
	2007	2008
University of Almeria	2	5
University of Cadiz	2	5
University of Cordoba	7	7
University of Granada	4	11
University of Huelva	5	6
International University	-	3
University of Jaen	3	9
University of Malaga	3	26
University of Pablo de Olavide	3	6
University of Seville	3	7
TOTAL	32	85

Table 6. Applications submitted for evaluation for teaching staff accreditation

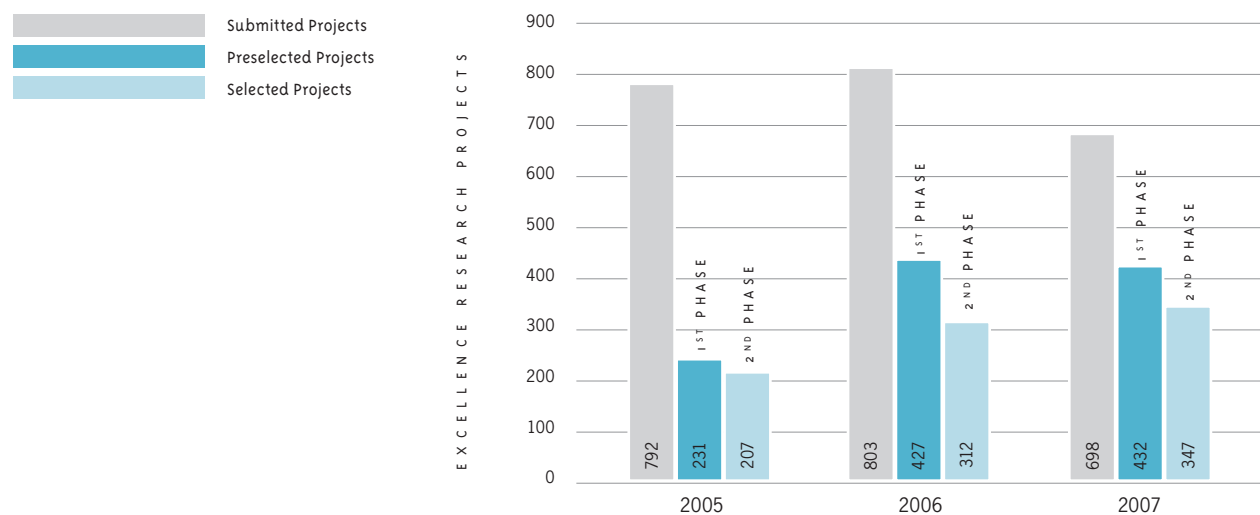
FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE	Number of Applications		
	2005	2006	2007
Experimental Science	128	164	181
Life Science	28	32	60
Health Science	79	113	70
Engineering and Architecture	151	149	211
Social Science	139	305	261
Legal Science	60	126	70
Economic and Business Sciences	139	160	86
Arts	79	168	227
TOTAL	803	1,217	1,166

Table 7. Teaching staff assessment and evaluation

UNIVERSITY	CALL				
	2004*	2005	2006	2007	TOTAL
University of Almeria	471	51	21	31	577
University of Cadiz	834	86	25	31	979
University of Cordoba	779	37	11	27	856
University of Granada	2,348	122	68	96	2,636
University of Huelva	368	78	34	26	506
University of Jaen	492	83	39	65	682
University of Malaga	1,171	77	72	71	1,393
University of Seville	2,321	239	97	126	2,796
International University	1	0	0	0	1
University of Pablo de Olavide	107	44	25	42	218
TOTAL	8,892	817	392	515	10,616

*UCUA

Figure 1. Research Projects assessment and evaluation





* (Use of External Quality Assurance
Procedures for Higher Education)
Standard 3.1



The first standard in Part 3 of Standards and Guidelines for external quality assurance agencies deals with the use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education, taking into account the presence of processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines. This section describes and evaluates the main external quality assurance processes used by AGAE. Section 6 evaluates these processes against the standards in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

AGAE has developed and is still developing the procedures and processes for external quality assurance. The Strategic Plan 2008-2010 will certainly contribute their consolidation.

Legislation envisages *assessment, accreditation and certification of quality* as the main mechanisms of quality assuring standards (see AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th art. 6). To do so, the Agency has established two committees to exercise delegated powers in making decisions on individual applications for assessment, accreditation or certification. These two committees are specialized in the following two areas:

1. **Higher Education Area (HEA)**

Evaluation of institutional quality and assessment of university teaching staff, and

2. **Research, Development and Innovation Area (RDIA)**

Evaluation of research programs, groups and initiatives.

A common feature of the major processes for external quality assurance is the appointment of panels of experts (preferably from outside Andalusia) to advise the AGAE on whether the individual institutions and programmes and the proposed research projects meet the relevant criteria for quality assurance.

The number of applications has been very large and varied as can be extracted from the AGAE annual reports found in the evidence pack. The operation of these two committees has proved satisfactory. The Agency itself has been free to deal with broad strategic issues while decisions on assessment, accreditation and certification have been made by the specialist committees (i.e. HEA and RDIA).

Further details about the use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education and research are given next.

Evaluation of Institutional Quality

Evaluation/assessment of institutional quality was the main function of UCUA and has continued to be of great importance for the AGAE nowadays including both the assessment of university departments, centres, degrees, services and facilities and; since 2007, the assessment of proposals for new postgraduate programmes of Andalusian Public Universities within the EHEA.

The AGAE's basic programme accreditation policy, criteria and processes regarding institutional quality are set out in the following public documents which are presented as evidence to support the fulfilment of Standard 3.1:

- Eo1** Plan for the Quality of Andalusian Universities
- Eo2** Guidelines for the self-evaluation report for institutional assessment
- Eo3** Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment
- Eo4** Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- Eo5** Decree 1509/2005, December 16th which modifies Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- Eo6** Decree 1393/2007, October 29, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- Eo7** Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Postgraduate Program Implementation
- Eo8** 'Dublin' descriptors

These guidelines are intended to assist stakeholders in establishing, maintaining and improving, quality assurance procedures and simultaneously meet the requirements of the Agency in respect of quality assurance.

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Institutional assessment is carried out based on recommendations by an external evaluation committee (EEC). This external committee reviews the documentation submitted by the stakeholders, visit the institution and make a written external report. The EEC must have a balanced composition where experts from the academic/institution, scientific and professional/business fields are represented. Committee members are independent of the institution and they are selected from a database of experts from Andalusian and non-Andalusian universities and businesses, and other nationally based quality assurance agencies.

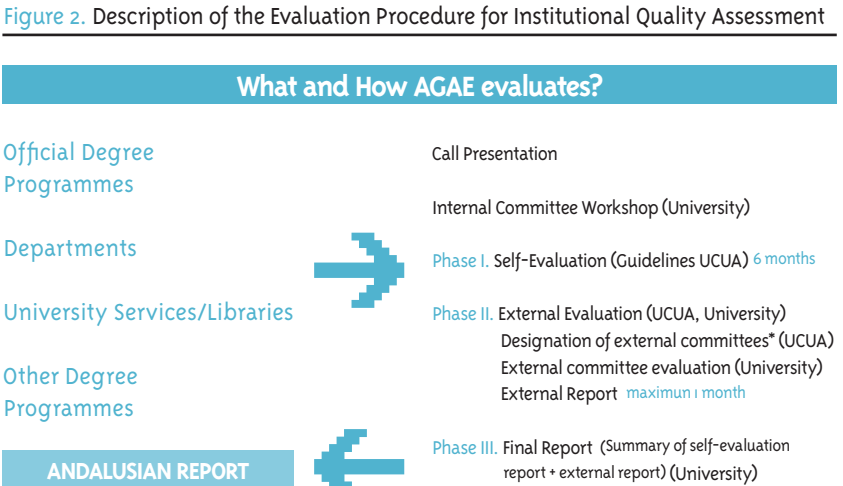
The external committee evaluation is completed in four to six weeks after receipt of the self-evaluation report. Formal decision making rests on the meetings of the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee thereafter.

Stakeholders (i.e. government department with jurisdiction over universities) have expressed general satisfaction (more than 50% are highly satisfied as can be found in the survey results) and they significantly value the independence, objectivity, and transparency that have ruled the EEC selection and the writing up of the final decision report.

External Committee members in general report themselves also satisfied or very satisfied with the process.

The setting up of the EHEA in universities programmes has brought significant delay in the continuation of this AGAE activity. Both universities and government departments have shown considerable interest in the development of efficient tools for the assessment of the established degree programmes. Considerable efforts will have to be made on this direction in the short and medium terms.

The following Figure 2 summarizes the evaluation of institutional quality procedure and shows the external quality assurance procedures used:



* The EEC must have a balanced composition where experts from the academic/institutions, scientific and professional/ business fields are represented.

In other matter, as mentioned earlier, since 2007 with the - Decree 56/2005, January 21st, 2007 on the **Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions** and - Decree 1393/2007, October 29th, 2007 on the **Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions**, the Regional Ministry for Innovation, Science and Business of the Regional Government of Andalusia requested to the AGAE a report about the quality of proposals for Postgraduate Programmes to be implemented in Higher Education Institutions of Andalusia.

The Agency published a document *Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Postgraduate Program Implementation (Eo7)*. These guidelines are based on the *Criteria and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the General Agreements signed by the Spanish Network of Quality Agencies in Higher Education (REACU). In writing up these guidelines and criteria, every effort has been made to ensure that they provide for flexibility and variety to ensure their suitability to the structure of every programme.

Obtaining the Agency's approval requires that the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise through its University Directorate (DGU) submits a report on the post-graduate program to be implemented in each university to the AGAE of its evaluation. A group of independent experts are selected (with a minimum of two per post-graduate program) to appraise the quality of the programme. Evaluation outcomes together with the feedback from the group of experts are sent back to the DGU (our current stakeholder) for the final decision about its implementation. For quality assurance purposes, it would be desirable that the Agency had the final decision on which new post-graduate programmes can be implemented or not (i.e. make the post-graduate programmes be our stakeholders). This would help the culture shift from compliance with external requirements to institutional responsibility for maintaining standards. This is expected to happen in the short term (chapter VI Decree 1393/2007, October 29, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions) as post-graduate programme accreditation will be a major function of AGAE once these new post-graduate programmes have the first group of graduates (two to three years from its implementation).

Assessment of University Teaching Staff

Another important function of the Agency involves the assessment of the teaching and research activities of temporary staff to report to the Universities for their long term hiring (i.e. teaching staff accreditation). For each field of expertise a technical committee is created composed of three well-known experts from Universities and research centres from outside Andalusia. (see Table 8 below).

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Table 8. Composition of the technical committees for teaching staff assessment

FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE	Technical Committee Members	University	Function
EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE	Dr. María Vallet Regí	Complutense University of Madrid	Chairperson
	Dr. José Manuel Calleja Pardo	Autonomous University of Barcelona	Member
	Dr. Jaume Llibre Saló	Autonomous University of Madrid	Member
LIFE SCIENCE	Dr. Mariano Gactó Fernández	University of Murcia	Chairperson
	Dr. Germán Soler Grau	University of Extremadura	Member
	Dr. Marcelino Pérez de la Vega	University of León	Member
HEALTH SCIENCE	Dr. Pedro L. Fernandez Ruiz	University of Barcelona	Chairperson
	Dr. Manuel Pera Roman	Autonomous University of Barcelona	Member
	Dr. Camil Castelő-Branco Flores	Hospital Clinic of Barcelona	Member
ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE	Dr. Manuel Doblaré Castellano	University of Zaragoza	Chairperson
	Dr. Javier Montero de Juan	Complutense University of Madrid	Member
	Dr. Joan Jacas Moral	Polytechnic University of Cataluña	Member
SOCIAL SCIENCE	Dr. Pilar Arnaiz Sánchez	University of Murcia	Chairperson
	Dr. Antonio Francisco Alaminos Chica	University of Alicante	Member
	Dr. Juan Luis Castejón Costa	University of Murcia	Member
LEGAL SCIENCE	Dr. Luis Antonio Velasco San Pedro	University of Valladolid	Chairperson
	Dr. Domingo Bello Janeiro	University of La Coruña	Member
	Dr. Paz Andrés Sáenz de Santa María	University of Oviedo	Member
ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS SCIENCES	Dr. Valentín T. Azofra Palenzuela	University of Valladolid	Chairperson
	Dr. Esteban Fernández Sánchez	University of Oviedo	Member
	Dr. Rosario Gandoy Juste	University of Castilla la Mancha	Member
ARTS	Dr. Fernando Galván Reula	University of Alcalá	Chairperson
	Dr. Francisco Marco Simón	University of Zaragoza	Member
	Dr. Francisco Javier Díez de Revenga	University of Murcia	Member

These technical committees have the support of panel members also from outside Andalusia to help the evaluation process. This accreditation is carried out by these independent experts who follow the guidelines and criteria established in the following public documents:

- E09** Spanish University Act 6/2001, December 21st
- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E11** National Organic University Law 4/2007, April 12th which modifies the Spanish University Act 6/2001
- E12** University teaching staff accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes December 2005
- E13** AGAE Supplementary Guidelines for the Accreditation of university teaching staff December 2005
- E14** Resolution of February 16th, 2006 that make public the composition of the technical committees, as well as the processes approved by the Board of Directors of AGAE

- E15** Resolution of April 3rd, 2006 that modifies the composition of the technical committee in Law and Social Sciences
- E16** Resolution of December 14th, 2006 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation
- E17** Resolution of March 19th, 2007 that modifies the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation, as well as the appeals committee
- E18** Resolution of February 1st, 2008 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation

This procedure ensures the quality of the process.

The technical committee from the appropriate area of expertise is also in charge of the evaluation of emeritus professors. The documents that support the external evaluation in this action are:

- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E19** AGAE Guidelines for the evaluation of emeritus professors

A similar procedure is applied for the good teaching performance incentives programme. In this case the teaching incentives committee is created composed of members of AGAE (including the Director) and up to 13 well-known Professors from different areas of expertise (see Table 9 below). This committee may require the advice from the scientific community (external experts) to ensure an efficient, distant and fully independent decision making.

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Table 9. Committee members of the teaching incentives programme

President
<i>Dr. Elías Fereres Castiel. Director of AGAE</i>
Vocals
HEALTH SCIENCE: <i>Dr. María del Carmen González García. University of Castilla la Mancha</i>
EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE: <i>Dr. José María Vega Piqueres. University of Seville</i>
LIFE SCIENCE: <i>Dr. Magdalena Aguiló Díaz. University Rovira I Virgili</i>
PHYSICS AND MATHS: <i>Dr. Dolores Baró Mariné. Autonomous University of Barcelona</i>
CHEMISTRY: <i>Dr. Dolores Pérez Bendito. University of Cordoba</i>
SOCIAL SCIENCE: <i>Dr. José Manuel Esteve Zarazaga. University of Malaga</i>
ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS SCIENCES: <i>Dr. José A. Domínguez Machuca. University of Seville</i>
LEGAL SCIENCE: <i>Dr. Pedro Escribano Collado. University of Seville</i>
HISTORY: <i>Dr. Arturo Ruiz Rodríguez. University of Jaen</i>
PHILOSOPHY AND PHYLOLOGY: <i>Dr. Juan José Acero Fernández- University of Granada</i>
ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE: <i>Dr. M^a Amparo Vila Miranda, University of Granada</i>

The documentation that supports the external evaluation process for this AGAE's action is:

- E20** University teaching staff evaluation: Teaching, research and management incentives. Policy, Criteria and Processes for 2006-2008. May 2006
- E21** Supplementary Guidelines for the teaching, research and management incentives of university teaching staff: Salary and complements. December 2003
- E22** Resolution of February 21st, 2008 that make public the composition of the teaching incentives committees approved by the University Directorate (DGU) from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise

Lastly, since 2007 AGAE signed an agreement with ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assurance) for developing procedures for teaching performance assessment (DOCENTIA). With this programme, quality assurance agencies of Spain try to satisfy the demands from the universities, which are highly committed to the enhancement of the quality of their programmes, as well as to provide the educational system with patterns and procedures that ensure teaching quality and foster teachers' development and recognition. The external evaluation for this programme is currently underway as a pilot programme in a number of universities. Some documents that support the actions undertaken within this programme are:

- E23** Official Agreement between AGAE and ANECA to manage the Docentia Programme
- E24** ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA. Standard 1.4
- E25** Guidelines for the development and implementation of evaluation processes within the DOCENTIA framework

Evaluation of Research Programmes, groups and initiatives

Research has played a role of growing importance in the academic life of many AGAE stakeholders. There has been considerable debate over this role in recent years both at national and regional levels and the recently approved *Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law* of the 3rd December 2007, provides the basic organisation of the Andalusian Knowledge System and is the most recent example of the efforts made from the regional government of Andalusia to ensure quality of research. In this climate, AGAE has been given responsibility for the assessment of research, development and technological innovation including the activities of the PAIDI groups.

Criteria and processes for reviewing the effectiveness of external quality assurance procedures in research are set in the following documents:

- E26** AGAE Guidelines and criteria for Research Project Assessment (Law of March 15th, 2007 in BOJA 63, March 29th, 2007 pp. 11-23)
- E27** Standards and Guidelines for Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI groups (Law of September 3rd, 2007 in BOJA 187, September 21st, 2007. pp. 6-9)
- E28** Guidelines and Criteria for other research activities evaluation for the period 2006-2008 (Law of September 3rd, 2006 in BOJA III, June 12th, 2006. pp. 8-15)
- E29** The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme (*Plan Andaluz de I+D+I or PAIDI 2007-2013*)

As for the other functions of AGAE evaluation of research is carried out based on recommendations by panels of experts.

To help the external evaluation procedure, the Agency has up to thirteen coordinators of scientific committees according to areas of expertise (see Table 3). They help the RDIA committee in contacting the panel experts from outside Andalusia, and in ensuring a coherent final decision making.



* (AGAE and Part 2 of European
Standards and Guidelines)



Standard 3.1 requires that the agency make use of the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines. This section considers the extent to which the major external quality assurance functions of AGAE, described in the previous section, satisfy those standards and guidelines.

Standard 2.1. Use of internal quality assurance procedures

A general criterion for good quality in AGAE'S work is that the work shall be in accordance with AGAE's Strategic Plan 2008-2010 and the stated goals of its *Service Letter*, under which the work is carried out:

- ✱ in accordance with approved procedures and guidelines
- ✱ procedures and guidelines for the work are in accordance with recognized international practice in the area
- ✱ with consistency and equal treatment
- ✱ independently of stakeholders and providers
- ✱ with openness and clear communication externally so that external parties can benefit from process and result

Further criteria or indicators of good quality in precise work processes are specified in the procedure or performance descriptions for each process or performance.

The *Service Letter* is an official document for internal quality assurance published in the autonomous official journal (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008) where AGAE disseminates and makes public to its providers and stakeholders its expected performance with respect to its functions and its compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines. In doing so, the Agency commits itself explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E30 Strategic Plan 2008-2010

E31 Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)

Standard 2.2. Development of external quality assurance processes

The Board of Directors approves the annual activities of AGAE and these are published in the Agency's website. The major processes included in the AGAE's activities are developed through a process of research and consultation. Members from the three specialised committees participate actively in the development proc-

esses. Lastly, the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee and the Board of Directors ratify the agreed external quality assurance processes.

Stakeholders and providers, on the other hand, (panel experts mainly) also participate in this consultation process although greater efforts have to be made on this regard. The increasing application of 'stakeholders' surveys' with each of AGAE'S programs reflects the effort made to guarantee an efficient and more participative consultation process.

All external quality assurance processes are defined so as to ensure that they fit the aims and objectives set for them. Once they are approved, information is made available in the Agency's website (Guidelines, Manuals, etc.). The programme is put in place once the call is published.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E32 Document with definition of AGAE's Key-Processes

E33 Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance

Standard 2.3. Criteria for decisions

As mentioned earlier, the criteria for the decisions for the entire major quality assurance processes of AGAE are published prior to the implementation of the process so as to ensure that they are known by all the actors and accurately applied before the decision has to be made.

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Decisions for the different programmes are taken by more than one person (i.e. panel experts, working team, supervision of an area coordinator, etc.); this together with the fact that information about the different processes is public facilitates the decision making process and guarantee fairness and coherence. Furthermore, the Agency has paid especial attention to the training of expert panels in specific programmes such as those related to institutional assessment. For the rest of programmes (i.e. assessment of university teaching staff and evaluation of research programmes, groups and initiatives) a number of meetings are maintained between the panel experts and the Agency staff in charged of the programme, this guarantees close communication and interaction between them. However, the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 highlights continuous experts training as one of the main priorities of the Agency so as to ensure an efficient decision making process (Strategic Objective 8).

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E33 Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance

- E03** Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment (the section devoted to the training of expert panels)

Standard 2.4. Processes fit for purpose

AGAE has developed a growing number of new processes since its creation in 2005. Some of these are one-off while others are periodic. Yet, the processes have been fit for purpose. AGAE, as indicated in its Strategic Plan 2008-2010 is committed to continual review and minimal regulation and efforts are continuously made in this direction (see page 9 of the Strategic Plan).

Thus, **panel of experts** are carefully selected paying especial attention to their qualification and experience. **Ex-post evaluations** include the self-evaluation report (when necessary) and the external assessment by a group of independent experts after their visit so as to ensure that the decision made is well-informed. Lastly, regarding **periodic evaluations**, efforts are made to develop appropriate and efficient quality assurance procedures for the continuous enhancement of quality.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

- E03** Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment (the section devoted to the training of expert panels)
- E32** Document with definition of AGAE's Key-Processes
- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance
- E34** Panel experts database management
- E35** Map of AGAE's key-processes

Standard 2.5. Reporting

The Agency is committed to publishing reports. Evaluation reports are written in a homogenous way, following the guidelines established for the different programmes, which guarantees homogeneity between them. These reports are facilitated to the stakeholders. Reports of institutional assessment programmes are published by the Agency in its website. Providers can consult the results from the accreditation of university staff programme through the internet. Decisions for the rest of programmes are published in aggregate in the annual report. Efforts should be made so as to facilitate easy and quick internet access to users and providers of the different AGAE's activities. Furthermore, the Agency should also ensure that all final documents are written in a clear language following the European Standards and Guidelines.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E33 Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance

Standard 2.6. Follow-up procedures

For periodic programmes, AGAE staff pays especial attention to detecting problems to previous calls for the continuous improvement of the programme. Furthermore, there is also close connection between the panel experts and the AGAE staff in charge of each programme. This allows for any problem in the process to be detected prematurely and solved in time.

Ad hoc commissions have been created to elaborate and revise manuals of Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures for the different programmes in place. The composition of these commissions includes members from the Quality Units of the different Andalusian Universities, as well as external expert recruited for this purpose. Thus, commissions were created to elaborate a manual to assess university services, or to prepare the Guidelines for the establishment of an 'Ensuring Quality System' for University Degrees (Decree 1393/2007) among others.

Regarding specific programmes, applicants to the accreditation of university teaching staff programme can follow the decision process through the internet. Institutional assessment programmes included detailed information from the panel expert involved about the improvements needed. AGAE's staff (technician in charge) takes care of the follow-up measures taken but the Agency has not had a policy of informing the panel members of the results of any follow-up activities and this is of general application to the rest of programmes implemented in the Agency. In September 2008, it is expected that the National Network of Agencies for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (REACU) will agree on an official document for institutional assessment follow-up. Similarly, there is currently a 'working group' of technicians for the different regional quality assurance agencies preparing a follow-up document of the DOCENTIA programme.

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Therefore, AGAE is aware of the need for establishing a systematic follow-up procedure where necessary to guarantee the transparency and effectiveness of the mechanisms for improvement. In fact, this action has been included in the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 (Objective 1, Strategy 14). The aim is for the publicly visible closing of the loop does not have to wait for a subsequent review.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E36 REACU's minutes of June 16th, 2008 regarding the follow-up of post-graduate programmes

Standard 2.7. Periodic reviews

Post-graduate programmes evaluated in 2006 are subject to accreditation within a fixed period (typically 2 or 3 years). This accreditation implies a review of the programme. This will include a self-assessment by the unit concerned, and a report from an external panel appointed by the Agency. A tentative calendar for accreditation and a provisional budget of the programme execution has been presented by the Head of the HEA committee to the Board of Directors meeting held in June 9th, 2008. In other matter, research activity evaluation of the Andalusian research groups (i.e. researchers individually and PAIDI groups) is subject to the annual evaluation of their activities since 2007.

However, systematic periodic reviews are not considered for the rest of programmes undergone in the Agency or its implementation is not completed yet as it is the case of DOCENTIA-Andalusia.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

- E06** Decree 1393/2007, October 29th, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance
- E37** Standards and Guidelines for Research Incentives within the Andalusian Knowledge System for 2008-2013. (Law of December 11th, 2007 in BOJA 4, January 5th, 2008)

Standard 2.8. System-wide analyses

The evolution of AGAE's since its creation in 2005 has been to move from a focus on just institutional assessment (as its predecessor UCUA) to become the main instrument for quality promotion and assurance of teaching-learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System. Thus, one of the main strategic objectives of the Agency is to become the first source of information about the quality of the system and as such, to be able to help out the decision making process. In doing so, the Agency will become a reference for the regional government, the Andalusian university and research system and, the society overall (students, employers, etc.).

To do so, the Agency has published its 'Service Letter' with detailed information about its activities and the quality assurance processes applied. Furthermore, AGAE provides annual reports with aggregate information about its evaluation, certification and accreditation activities.

Evidences to support the fulfilment of this standard

E31 Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)

E38 AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)



* (AGAE and Part 3 of European Standards
and Guidelines - The internal evaluation)



Standard 3.2. Official Status

Documentation

- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005
- E40** Decree 117/2008 of April 29th with the structure of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE)
- E41** Innovation and Modernisation scheme for Andalusia (PIMA)
- E42** The Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law of the 3rd December 2007
- E43** Action Plan of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise 2008-2012

Standard and guideline application

AGAE was established by the autonomic government for the purpose, *inter alia*, of quality assuring higher education providers. It is a body dependent from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE). AGAE has full legal personality and capacity and its own assets with which it carries out its functions. It is independent of institutional influence in its decisions.

The Agency's assessment, accreditation and certification activities are considered to be administrative activities, subject to public law and its safeguards.

The legislative recognition of AGAE with its own legal personality and powers in assessment, accreditation and certification are a strong argument for this standard.

Standard 3.3. Activities

Documentation

- E09** Spanish University Act 6/2001, December 21st
- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E11** National Organic University Law 4/2007, April 12th which modifies the Spanish University Act 6/2001
- E30** Strategic Plan 2008-2010
- E31** Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)
- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance
- E35** Map of AGAE's key-processes
- E38** AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)
- E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005
- E44** AGAE Code of Ethics
- E45** AGAE's website (www.agae.es)

Standard and guideline application

The *National Organic Law 6/2001*, December 21st (Title V) and the *Regional Andalusian University Law* established the legislative and legal framework for the activities that AGAE may carry out. It specifically defines the aim of AGAE as being the *assessment, accreditation and certification of quality within the terms of reference of the Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Andalusia*. The activities and functions were specifically defined in Section 4 earlier on.

Planning and public dissemination of the **Agency's activities and services** is one of the strategic processes (objective e35 Strategic Plan). The Service Letter, the annual Activities Report, and the AGAE website timely inform of the annual activities of the Agency.

Standard 3.4. Resources

Documentation

Economic Resources

E39 AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005

E46 Report of the annual budget from the Regional Ministry of Finances 2007

http://www.ceh.junta-andalucia.es/planif_presup/presupuesto2007/memoria/memoria-e-04.pdf

E47 General Law from the Tax and Revenue Agency of the Autonomous Government of Andalucía —Ley General de la Hacienda Pública de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía (art. 80.2)

E48 Reglamento de Intervención de la Junta de Andalucía —Intervention legislation. (art. 45 and 46)

E49 Instrucción 4/2003 de 30 de Junio de la Intervención General de la Junta de Andalucía, por la que se dictan normas relativas a la contabilización y el control de las operaciones registradas en el Sistema de Registro de Facturas y Fondos de Órgano Gestor del Sistema Integrado Júpiter (FOG). Intervention legislation

E50 Law 6/1997, dated April 14 about the Functioning of the State General Administration (BOE April 15th, 1997) and its updates (Ley 6/1997, de 14 de abril, de Organización y Funcionamiento de la Administración General del Estado)

Human resources

E39 AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005

E51 Functional organization chart of AGAE by sections and professional categories

E52 Short CVs of the management and experts specialised in assessment

- E53** Employment and working conditions of regular AGAE employees
- E54** Plan for the prevention of risks at work. Law 54/2003 of December 12th for the Prevention of risks at work (BOE 298)

Material resources

- E55** AGAE Inventory
- E56** Regulation of public enterprise in Andalusia: Guidelines for the procurement of material resources

Standard and guideline application

Economic Resources

The AGAE annual budget is issued annually by the Regional Ministry of Economy. The AGAE has autonomy with regard to the distribution and annual monitoring of the budget, which is implemented according to the planning of annual activities, the purpose being to guarantee the availability of financial resources for the Agency's activities throughout the year.

The AGAE annual budget is part of the general budget from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise and therefore it has to be approved by the Andalusian Parliament. This requirement guarantees the budget transparency as well as viability.

Incomes are mainly allocated to finance the current and personnel expenditure. The accounts of AGAE are subject to an annual financial audit by the Auditor General.

Human Resources

As indicated in the AGAE'S statutes, the staff of AGAE is made up of the Agency's permanent staff (most of which comes from UCUA), who are hired and contracted as regular employees on the basis of merit and capability, and personnel from the Andalusian administration, public universities and research centres (i.e. CSIC, IFAPA, etc.).

The staff consists of fourteen employees which has shown proficiency to successfully organise and operate its external quality assurance processes in an active and efficient manner based on the current level of activities. Growing areas of activity with the change to the new AKA may require a change in the mix of professional and administrative skills in AGAE. Further details are given in the organisational chart of the Agency in **E51**.

The Agency has also a legal advisor and thirteen coordinators of scientific committees according to areas of expertise (see Table 3). These coordinators bring their expertise in the implementation and improvement of the different research and teaching activities of the Agency.

One weak aspect regarding human resources is that a better description and appraisal of the various different jobs would also be very useful; this weakness is considered in the Strategic Plan as a major area for improvement.

Aside from its regular staff, the AGAE also collaborates with advisers and experts in each activity, who make up sub-committees and working groups that help external quality assurance processes to run more efficiently.

Material resources

Inventory

AGAE maintains an inventory of all of its moveable assets, data processing equipment, software packages and programmes, etc.

In addition to periodic monitoring of the budget, the Agency's requirements and anticipated needs for tangible assets and the constant renewal of obsolete assets are monitored. All of AGAE's tangible assets are authorised according to the prevailing regulations.

Computer hardware

AGAE provides equipment that is sufficient and appropriate for the organisation's working requirements. There is a balance between needs and the technical specifications of the computer equipment. The prevailing policy with regard to computer systems is that equipment be homogeneous and as compatible as possible in order to create economies of scale. AGAE currently has the following computer equipment: servers: 2 units; computers: 27 desktop computers, 11 PC laptops and 8 PDA; peripherals: 20 printers (2 colour), 3 multifunction (printer/photocopier/scanner/fax), 2 scanners, 1 cannon, 1 flat TV, 1 video-conferencing equipment, 3 webcams, 2 backup units, 2 3G cards.

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Software packages

- ★ The AGAE website: The website is AGAE's main instrument for instant communication. All relevant information for the university community and potential users regarding the Agency's services and activities is posted and made available there.
- ★ Intranet for the Andalusian Regional Government: Given the Agency's staff size there is not a local intranet for internal documents. However, employees actively use the intranet from the regional government and that of the Regional Ministry for Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE).
- ★ The Agency server: AGAE has a server for sharing information. Information is classified by area and access is restricted to the different employees depending on their responsibilities.

- ★ The Extranet: The extranet is a on-line workspace open to panel experts. It is currently used by those involved in the teaching staff and research assessment activities. They assess the information and draw up the corresponding technical reports on-line.

Apart from traditional software packages the Agency use specific packages from the regional government (Junta de Andalucía) such as: digital signature of documents (port@firma), official registry for documents (@ries), economic management (Jupiter), human resources management (sirhus), etc.

The library

The AGAE library currently houses around 454 documents. The main body of these documents (approximately 36%) are publications from other national and international Quality Assurance Agencies. The archive also contains newspapers (national ones) and legislation (BOE and BOJA).

The main services that the library offers the Agency employes and panel experts are document search, acquisition and the handling of internal loans.

Procurement of material resources

All administrative procurement procedures are set down in the Agency's support processes (procurement guidelines or instructions for processing large procurements) following the guidelines established in the Catalogue for the procurement of material resources.

Standard 3.5. Mission Statement

Documentation

- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E31** Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)
- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's action for Quality Assurance
- E38** AGAE annual reports
- E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005
- E44** AGAE Code of Ethics
- E45** AGAE's website (www.agae.es)
- E57** AGAE's Quality Plan

Standard and guideline application

The goals and functions of AGAE are clearly defined in the Regional Andalusian Universities Law (see article 81, Chapter II) and are stated in the Agency's statutes (article 6, Chap-

ter I), which also regulate the requirement that AGAE is run in accordance with a quality system. The goals and functions of AGAE are given on the Agency's website and in its Service Letter.

AGAE's main activity is external quality assurance and a systematic approach is applied in its work methods to achieve its aims and purpose. In the evaluation processes that the Agency carries out, its external quality assurance procedures act as a complement to the internal mechanisms used by its stakeholders.

On this background it is clear that as a quality controller AGAE too must have a satisfactory internal quality assurance system. AGAE has been aware of this ever since the Agency was established in 2005 and has worked systematically on the development of a satisfactory system. This fact provides a good foundation for systematic assurance and development of quality. AGAE's employees are pretty much aware of this issue and when evaluating the implementation of a programme they always assess whether there is a need for changes in the system. Coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees also collaborate on this task. Thus, the quality assurance system covers all AGAE's activities and shall ensure that the Agency's tasks are performed efficiently with high quality, and that instances of poor quality in the work are uncovered and that appropriate measures are implemented. So far, the quality policy focuses on two instruments: the code of ethics and external evaluation on the basis of the European model. The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 includes the development of a *quality manual* that will formally set out the quality policy of the Agency for its stakeholders and providers. This *quality manual* has become visible in a **Quality Plan** recently approved by the Board of Directors.

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Standard 3.6. Independence

Documentation

- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005
- E44** AGAE Code of Ethics
- E57** AGAE's Quality Plan
- E58** Official document signed by panel expert to ensure the non-existence of a conflict of interest
- E59** Recognised degree of appeal process in the different AGAE activities

In order for the Agency to be able to deal with its new obligations deriving from both the Spanish and Andalusian legislation and to have adequate assurance of its independence, professionalism and freedom to operate that are all characteristic of the way that agencies in Europe operate, AGAE has full legal personality as

it has been created as an autonomous organization (organismo autónomo) and capacity and its own assets with which it carries out its functions, being independent of institutional influence in its decisions. The Agency makes its decisions in an independent manner and is independent of influence from government, institutional and other sources (AGAE statutes, art. 9).

The Agency also recognises the **technical independence** of the advisory committees and panel experts. Furthermore, actions of these collaborators with AGAE must respect the internal quality system and the principles established in the code of ethics.

The operational independence of AGAE from the government is thereby safeguarded by way of official documents. It is customary in Spain, however, that all autonomous organizations are nominally headed by the highest authority of the Ministry to which they belong. This requirement stems from financial controls by the Finance Ministry and forces. As a result, the Regional Minister is the president of dozens of Boards such as the one of AGAE.

However, the fact that because of the legal structure of AGAE attached to the government department with jurisdiction over universities, has led to difficulties in identifying elements that put across AGAE's independence from the public image point of view. One consequence of this is that nomination of the top posts in the governing and assessment bodies is made by the incumbent (i.e. the regional Minister) of the Executive's ministry with jurisdiction over universities, in accordance with the Regional Andalusian Universities Law and the Agency's Statutes. These factors could limit the independence of AGAE and its committees if the Executive were to make interventionist use of the authority granted to it under the same regulations. Any such limitations are dealt with by the working of the committees are collegial bodies, so that, the decisions of these bodies are made according to a majority of the members.

Furthermore, an appeal process is set out in the assessment, accreditation and certification procedures. The procedures agreed for such appeals relate to any failure by the AGAE to act in accordance with its own published procedures.

Standard 3.7. External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

Documentation

- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance
- E38** AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)
- E52** Short CVs of the management and experts specialised in assessment

- E58** Official document signed by panel expert to ensure the non-existence of a conflict of interest
- E59** Recognised degree of appeal process in the different AGAE activities
- E60** Final evaluation reports for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance

Standard and guideline application

The **process, criteria and procedures used by AGAE are predefined** and publicly available on the AGAE website and in printed form in some cases. The Agency manuals specify the processes and guidelines for assessment including details of the schedule and other logistical factors that need to be known by the stakeholders and providers.

The evaluative processes generally involve (i) self-assessment by the subject of the quality assurance process; (ii) external assessment by a group of independent experts; (iii) publication of a report including decisions, recommendations and formal outcomes and (iv) a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations or conditions. The four sub-processes will be analysed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The following Table 10 shows whether the different evaluative processes are implemented in the various activities of the Agency:

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Table 10. Check-list of the evaluative processes and AGAE activities

AGAE activities	Self-assessment	External assessment	Publication of a report	Follow-up procedure
Evaluation of quality assurance in Higher Education Institutions	✓	✓	✓	x
Assessment of proposals for the new Postgraduate Programmes of Andalusian Public Universities	x	✓	✓	pending
Teaching Staff Accreditation	x	✓	✓	x
Emeritus Professors Evaluation	x	✓	✓	x
Docentia	x	✓	✓	pending
Good teaching performance incentives	x	✓	✓	x
Research Project Evaluation	x	✓	✓	✓
Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI Groups	x	✓	✓	✓
Other Research Activities Evaluation: Research Incentives	x	✓	✓	x

The evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions includes a **self-evaluation stage** that is compulsory in order for the external assessment to be carried out. Self-evaluation includes, without exception, sections where the strong and weak points of the dimensions analysed are considered, as a complement to the descriptive elements and evidence. The self-evaluation methodology also calls for an assessment by the internal committees of the situation regarding the quality indicators.

Self-evaluation in new postgraduate programmes of Andalusian public universities has not been carried out yet as these degree programmes have not graduated any student yet.

All quality assurance processes that include self-evaluation are complemented by an **external evaluation carried out by a committee of experts**. External evaluation is also included in quality assurance processes that do not call for self-evaluation. As mentioned in section 5 of this self-evaluation report, a common feature of the processes for external quality assurance undertaken in AGAE is the appointment of panels of experts (preferably from outside Andalusia) to advise the Agency on whether the individual institutions and programmes and the proposed research projects meet the relevant criteria for quality.

The external evaluation procedures are described in the methodology guidebooks and/or the agreements to develop each programme. The make-up of the committees of experts is established according to the general characteristic of each programme. It always includes, however, experts of renowned prestige in other areas of Spain (outside Andalusia).

In accordance with AGAE's quality procedures, the typical committee make-up for the external evaluation is composed of two experts. They are supervised by the *coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees* in the programmes that involve **evaluation of research programmes, groups and initiatives** and in the assessment of **new postgraduate programmes** of Andalusian Public Universities. AGAE's coordinators act as a third expert in the panel and participate in the final decision making. *Technical committees* mentioned in Table 8 are in charge of the **programmes for teaching staff accreditation, emeritus professors evaluation and good teaching performance incentives**. *Ad hoc* external committees (EEC) are created for the **evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions** following the steps explained in Figure 2.

Student participation on AGAE's external committees is limited. Students have participated in the internal committees for the evaluation of the Plan for the Quality of Andalusian Universities and, they have also been interviewed by the EEC in the institutional assessment programmes. However, there is certainly a need for improvement in this matter. AGAE is already considering the inclusion of students in the assessment of proposals for the new postgraduate programmes, the accreditation of already established postgraduate programmes of Andalusian Public Universities,

and the teaching performance assessment (DOCENTIA- Andalusia). Furthermore, AGAE is currently working on the elaboration of an update database of advisors and panel experts, it is desirable the inclusion of students within this dataset.

External evaluation involves visits to the unit in the case of the evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions that are already fully implemented. In other cases, external evaluation is carried out according to the documentary analysis submitted by the stakeholders.

The work of the external committees is described in the evaluation guidebook. The external committees are also provided with documentary information on the aims of the evaluation, the work of the committee, and the structure and preparation of the external evaluation report.

The profile of experts involved in all programmes is specified by AGAE. **Expertise** is guaranteed through the appointment of individuals with well knowledge of the discipline and/or quality assurance processes. **Independence** is promoted through the appointment of experts from outside the Andalusian system as much as possible, and by of statements regarding the non-conflict of interests with the units that are assessed.

The AGAE annual report includes the aggregate outcomes of the different programmes of evaluated. These reports are prepared by the AGAE technical unit and are approved by AGAE's Board of Directors. They are published in hardcopy as well as on the Agency website.

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Specific results (whether positive or negative) are sent to the stakeholder (i.e. professor being accredited or receiving a good teaching incentive, government department with jurisdiction over universities, etc.).

Follow-up is an area in which AGAE needs to improve. The fact that universities (through the government department with jurisdiction over them) have chosen to carry out the ex post assessment of degree programmes prior to the assessing the improvement plans has significantly contributed to the low development of follow-up procedures. The setting up of the EHEA has also been an important determinant of this delay. Efforts are needed in this direction.

The AGAE statutes and the committee regulations lay down that the proceedings of the Committees of evaluations and its sub-committees may be subject to a **right of appeal before the AGAE Standing Committee**, the result of which is final. Pending the putting into effect of accreditation systems due to a formal decision procedure that is required concerning quality assurance, AGAE has put together various mechanisms for units that are being assessed to send comments and proposals for corrections to AGAE reports to the Committees of evaluation and its sub-committees.

Professional management of the processes is based on: a) the work experience of personnel in the AGAE technical unit, which is made up of graduates and PhD holders with appropriate experience in university quality assurance, b) the appropriate selection of panel experts, and c) the methodology available to AGAE. With regard to this point, mention must be made of the processes to train experts who take part in external assessment committees nominated by AGAE.

Coherency of work methods is ensured through: training of the external assessment committees and the use of draft scripts for reports available to the assessment committees. External committees also include experts in quality assurance from AGAE itself (i.e. coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees). In relation to this, there is one AGAE working party made up of the heads of technical quality units.

Standard 3.8. Accountability procedures

Documentation

- E38** AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)
- E44** AGAE Code of Ethics
- E45** AGAE's webpage (www.agae.es)
- E46** Report of the annual budget from the Regional Ministry of Finances 2007
- http://www.ceh.junta-andalucia.es/planif_presup/presupuesto2007/memoria/memoria-e-04.pdf
- E47** General Law from the Tax and Revenue Agency of the Autonomous Government of Andalucía —Ley General de la Hacienda Pública de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía (art. 80.2)
- E48** Reglamento de Intervención de la Junta de Andalucía —Intervention legislation. (art. 45 and 46)
- E50** Law 6/1997, dated April 14 about the Functioning of the State General Administration (BOE April 15th, 1997) and its updates (Ley 6/1997, de 14 de abril, de Organización y Funcionamiento de la Administración General del Estado)
- E58** Official document signed by panel expert to ensure the non-existence of a conflict of interest
- E61** Stakeholders Survey: Document of Basic Results

Standard and guideline application

AGAE has arrangements in place for its own accountability. It is a member agency of ENQA and as such is subject to review against the ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, there exists strong awareness within the Agency about quality assurance. In this sense, the Board of Directors approved a code of ethics and is in process of approving an internal quality system manual (result of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2010). Both instruments must be respected by those providing services or collaborating with the Agency.

The AGAE statutes declare that the Agency must act on the basis of rigorousness, quality and objectiveness in its processes, governed by the principle of transparency with regard to methods, standards and results, in reference to its accountability to society (article 9). Annual reports of the activities undertaken are another instrument whereby the Agency is answerable to the Andalusian Knowledge System and society in general. Reports can be consulted on the AGAE website.

AGAE staff and experts who participate in the Agency's quality assurance processes must accept the Code of Ethics, and they sign a document to the effect that their work complies with the code. AGAE also enforces a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts. The universities and research centres (for research evaluation) also have the right to state the existence of a conflict of interest in relation to the make-up of external assessment committees (panel experts). Greater efforts should be made to make public the teams of advisers to enable third parties to inform AGAE of any conflict of interest.

AGAE does not subcontract quality assurance procedures.

The size and composition of AGAE's staff allows fluent communication among employees. The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 has facilitated this process. Since the functioning of the Agency is based on the specialized areas committees, regular revisions of the programmes in place are undertaken by the agents involved, which facilitate the identification of any problem. Nonetheless, it seems desirable to work in the implementation of a formal internal feedback mechanism.

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Until recently, AGAE did not have a formal external feedback mechanism for expert panel members, though it does collect anecdotal intelligence. Recently AGAE (for the purpose of this evaluation) surveyed external experts and the experience has convinced it to make follow-up questionnaires mandatory.

Finally, as mentioned at the beginning of this standard, AGAE's membership to the ENQA Association implies the Agency's commitment to be assessed as frequently as required and with the methodology established by the Association. This commitment is clearly stated in the annual reports.



* (Final self-evaluation assessment.
Summary of observations
and recommendations)



AGAE has transformed itself from the old UCUA consortium following the Spanish Universities Act with the introduction of mechanisms to promote academic excellence in Andalusia through a new quality system that is objective, independent and transparent. The new and young Agency has extended its functions beyond institutional assessment to provide the assurance of merit and capability in teaching staff selection and promotion, and quality improvement in all other areas of university activity including the evaluation of research activities.

As indicated earlier on in this report, changes in the legal situation and government policy have significantly affected the Agency functioning, which out of its reach, has frequently been driven to a 'stop-and-go' context. The large numbers of tasks assigned to AGAE with the personnel limitations experienced since its creation and, its peculiar legal status make it difficult to implement a long-term strategy for external quality assurance processes. Nonetheless, within this dynamic and changing context the Agency has successfully performed the core activities since its establishment in 2005 through the different programmes put in place. As a result:

- * The Agency has issued *more than 2,000 reports of accreditation* for contracting tenure-track and collaborating lecturers within Andalusian Universities.
- * It has *evaluated hundreds of departments, centres, degrees and services* for quality assurance within universities and higher education institutions.
- * It has *assessed more than one hundred proposals for the new Postgraduate Programmes* of Andalusian Public Universities (MSc and PhD).
- * AGAE has evaluated *more than 2,000 proposals for research grants* with the participation of *more than 1,000 panel experts from outside Andalusia*.
- * Each year, the Agency *evaluates the research activity of more than 1,700 PAIDI groups* (i.e. research group within the regional plan for research, development and innovation).
- * Yearly, AGAE also evaluates *more than 1,200 proposals for other research incentives* such as congress attendance, publications, short-term visits to prestigious universities and research centres, etc.
- * Lastly, the Agency has *assessed teaching, research and management activities of more than 10,000 teaching staff members in Public Universities* —working under contract or after having sat public examination- to designate additional salary rewards.

Furthermore, AGAE has made every effort to follow the European Standards and Guidelines as it declares in its *Service Letter*.

In summary, the main AGAE's achievements since its establishment are:

- ★ The original assessment activities of UCUA have been taken over smoothly without significant disruption to users and providers; additionally, many new functions were implemented, as required by its clients.
- ★ Specific policies and procedures for all the major functions of AGAE have been established and published;
- ★ All the major functions needed to meet demands have been successfully implemented; in particular, the programmes of accreditation of new university staff, assessment of the new merit system for salary increases, and the evaluation of research grants, groups and institutions.
- ★ The accomplishments listed above were achieved with very limited personnel, by combining the hiring of technical staff with solid experience in quality assurance with the wide use of out of the region experts.
- ★ The training of AGAE's staff, as well as the successful internal communication policy implemented has contributed to a greater coordination among the different specialised committees and their tasks.
- ★ The networking with other regional quality assurance agencies of Spain under the REACU has also been an important asset in the Agency performance.
- ★ It is important to highlight that the period under review has been one of transition, based on the terms of the legislation and the implementation of the EHEA. Nonetheless, we believe the AGAE has contributed greatly to developing a new climate of quality assurance in Andalusian universities.

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The following recommendations address areas for improvement:

- ★ For the sake of achieving greater independence, it would be desirable to correct the imbalanced make-up of the Board of Directors between those in charge of the institutions evaluated and the representatives from those sectors associated with higher education and research (employers, students, etc.). This is intended to be included in the new legislation.
- ★ In line with the previous improvement, it is also necessary to start and increase student participation in external quality assurance processes in the universities. This is in line with the need to enhance the active participation of students in all aspects of the governance of the university system in the Region.
- ★ Further system-wide analyses should be undertaken, especially with a greater level of self-evaluation so as to propose, develop and implement continuous improvement measures within the different AGAE's activities. It is important that the Agency is seen as a partner for quality assurance and not simply as an external referee. In line with this argument more training seminars about evaluation and quality assurance addressed to the Agency's users and should be promoted.

- ✧ Formal feedback mechanisms need to be put in place (i.e. Satisfaction surveys).
- ✧ It is also necessary to improve the software packages for certain quality assurance procedures (i.e. those for university teaching staff accreditation and research evaluation).
- ✧ The ineffective implementation of the follow-up evaluation of improvement plans is a weakness that needs to be overcome.
- ✧ External assessment processes of university programs could be improved through:

- * Ensuring that panels are comprehensively debriefed on completion of their work
- * Making sure that final documents are written in a clear language following the European Standards and Guidelines

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* (List of evidences and abbreviations)



List of evidences and abbreviations

List of evidences

- E01** Plan for the Quality of Andalusian Universities
- E02** Guidelines for the self-evaluation report for institutional assessment
- E03** Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment
- E04** Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- E05** Decree 1509/2005, December 16th which modifies Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- E06** Decree 1393/2007, October 29, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- E07** Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Postgraduate Program Implementation
- E08** 'Dublin' descriptors
- E09** Spanish University Act 6/2001, December 21st
- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)
- E11** National Organic University Law 4/2007, April 12th which modifies the Spanish University Act 6/2001
- E12** University teaching staff accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes December 2005
- E13** AGAE Supplementary Guidelines for the Accreditation of university teaching staff December 2005
- E14** Resolution of February 16th 2006 that make public the composition of the technical committees, as well as the processes approved by the Board of Directors of AGAE
- E15** Resolution of April 3rd 2006 that modifies the composition of the technical committee in Law and Social Sciences
- E16** Resolution of December 14th 2006 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation
- E17** Resolution of March 19th 2007 that modifies the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation, as well as the appeals committee
- E18** Resolution of February 1st 2008 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation
- E19** AGAE Guidelines for the evaluation of emeritus professors
- E20** University teaching staff evaluation: Teaching, research and management incentives. Policy, Criteria and Processes for 2006-2008. May 2006

- E21** Supplementary Guidelines for the teaching, research and management incentives of university teaching staff: Salary and complements. December 2003
- E22** Resolution of February 21st 2008 that make public the composition of the teaching incentives committees approved by the University Directorate (DGU) from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise
- E23** Official Agreement between AGAE and ANECA to manage the Docentia Programme
- E24** ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA. Standard 1.4
- E25** Guidelines for the development and implementation of evaluation processes within the DOCENTIA framework.
- E26** AGAE Guidelines and criteria for Research Project Assessment (Law of March 15th, 2007 in BOJA 63, March 29th, 2007 pp. 11-23)
- E27** Standards and Guidelines for Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI groups (Law of September 3rd, 2007 in BOJA 187, September 21st, 2007. pp. 6-9
- E28** Guidelines and Criteria for other research activities evaluation for the period 2006-2008 (Law of September 3rd, 2006 in BOJA 111, June 12th, 2006. pp. 8-15)
- E29** The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme (*Plan Andaluz de I+D+I or PAIDI*)
- E30** Strategic Plan 2008-2010
- E31** Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)
- E32** Document with definition of AGAE's Key-Processes
- E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance
- E34** Panel experts database management
- E35** Map of AGAE's key-processes
- E36** REACU's Minutes of June 6th, 2008 regarding the follow-up of post-graduate programmes
- E37** Standards and Guidelines for Research Incentives within the Andalusian Knowledge System for 2008-2013. (Law of December 11th, 2007 in BOJA 4, January 5th, 2008)
- E38** AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)
- E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005
- E40** Decree 117/2008 of April 29th with the structure of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE).
- E41** Innovation and Modernisation scheme for Andalusia (PIMA)
- E42** The Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law of the 3rd December 2007
- E43** Action Plan of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise 2008-2012

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E44 AGAE Code of Ethics

E45 AGAE's website (www.agae.es)

E46 Report of the annual budget from the Regional Ministry of Finances 2007

http://www.ceh.junta-andalucia.es/planif_presup/presupuesto2007/memoria/memoria-e-04.pdf

E47 General Law from the Tax and Revenue Agency of the Autonomous Government of Andalucía —Ley General de la Hacienda Pública de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía (art. 80.2)

E48 Reglamento de Intervención de la Junta de Andalucía —Intervention legislation. (art. 45 and 46)

E49 Instrucción 4/2003 de 30 de Junio de la Intervención General de la Junta de Andalucía, por la que se dictan normas relativas a la contabilización y el control de las operaciones registradas en el Sistema de Registro de Facturas y Fondos de Órgano Gestor del Sistema Integrado Júpiter (FOG). Intervention legislation

E50 Law 6/1997, dated April 14 about the Functioning of the State General Administration (BOE April 15th, 1997) and its updates (Ley 6/1997, de 14 de abril, de Organización y Funcionamiento de la Administración General del Estado)

E51 Functional organization chart of AGAE by sections and professional categories

E52 Short CVs of the management and experts specialised in assessment

E53 Employment and working conditions of regular AGAE employees

E54 Plan for the prevention of risks at work. Law 54/2003 of December 12th for the Prevention of risks at work (BOE 298)

E55 AGAE Inventory

E56 Regulation of public enterprise in Andalusia: Guidelines for the procurement of material resources

E57 AGAE's Quality Plan

E58 Official document signed by panel expert to ensure the non-existence of a conflict of interest

E59 Recognised degree of appeal process in the different AGAE activities

E60 Final evaluation reports for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance

E61 Stakeholders Survey: Document of Basic Results

List of abbreviations

AGAE Andalusian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research
AKA Andalusian Knowledge Agency
ANECA National Agency for Quality Assurance
BOE Official Spanish Journal
BOJA Official Journal of the Andalusian Regional Government
CAU Andalusian Board of Universities
CICE Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise
CS Social Council
DGU University Directorate of the CICE
EEC external evaluation committee
EHEA European Higher Education Area
ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
HEA Higher Education Area Committee
HETAC Higher Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland
PAIDI The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme
PIMA The Innovation and Modernisation Scheme for Andalusia
RDIA Research, Development and Innovation Area Committee
REACU National network of regional quality assurance agencies
UAL University of Almeria
UCA University of Cadiz
UCO University of Cordoba
UCUA Consortium for Quality Assurance of the University System in Andalusia
UGR University of Granada
UHU University of Huelva
UJA University of Jaen
UMA University of Malaga
UPO University of Pablo de Olavide
USE University of Seville

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