



**ACPUA**

AGENCIA DE CALIDAD Y PROSPECTIVA  
UNIVERSITARIA DE ARAGÓN

PLAN OF  
ACTIVITIES

2024

Approved by the ACPUA Governing Board

(12 March 2024)

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## MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

### MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

It is a priority for ACPUA to ensure compliance with the Quality Policy incorporated in the Agency's Mission, Vision and Values as a guarantee of the quality of the activities carried out by the Agency. The Quality Policy is reviewed annually to maintain its validity and the Agency's Objectives and Annual Activity Plans are defined on this basis.

#### **Mission**

ACPUA's mission is to guarantee and promote the quality of the university system in Aragon. This mission includes both the development of useful links between the university, the socio-productive fabric, the institutional decision-making bodies and Aragonese society as a whole, and the promotion of the exchange of experiences, not only with other national and international university systems, but also with other educational levels (secondary education, vocational training, etc.).

To achieve this mission, ACPUA mainly carries out technical tasks of evaluation, certification and accreditation. This public service activity is complemented by research and foresight work and activities to promote a culture of quality in higher education in the region.

#### **Vision**

ACPUA aims to be an agile and efficient agency; one that will become essential in the territory due to the seriousness and operability of its service activity. Providing the added value of quality assurance, we will be an indispensable reference for all institutions and agents with educational responsibilities in the region.

We aspire to become, outside Aragon, a qualified agency and a recognised interlocutor in the European area of university quality and evaluation.

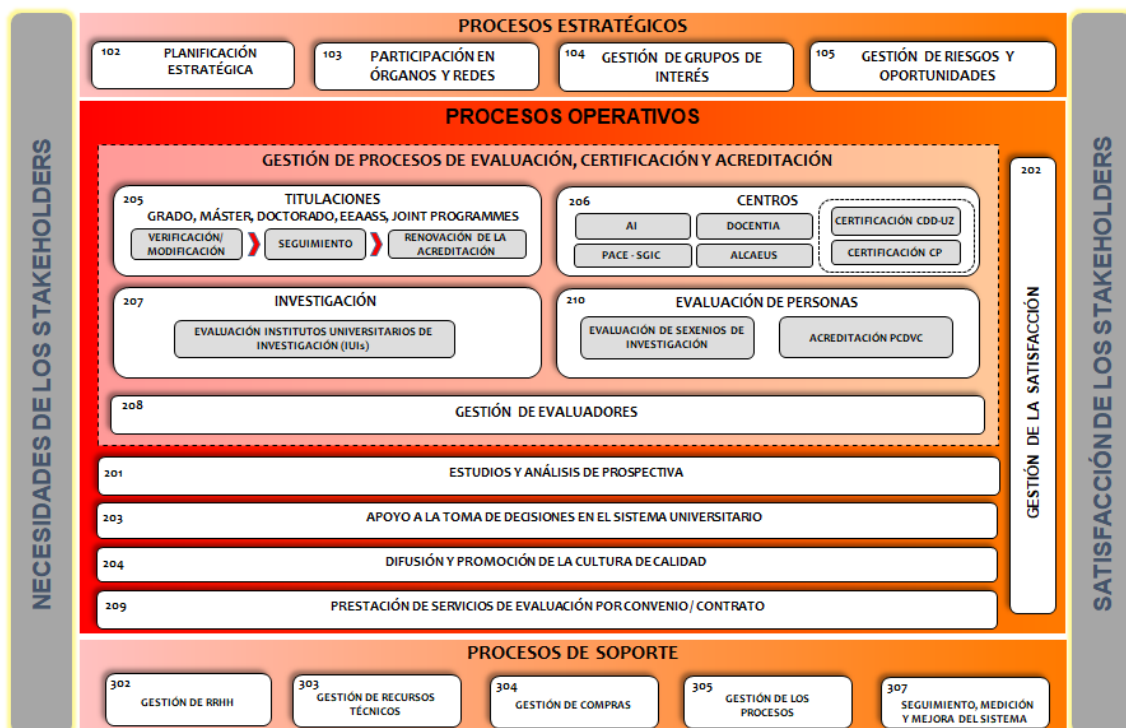
In order to achieve this vision, ACPUA must be governed in all its procedures and actions by European standards and guidelines (ESG). With transparency, independence of judgement and commitment to accountability, we support reflection, continuous improvement and creativity.

#### **Values**

- Independence, autonomy and objectivity.
- Social accountability and transparency by ensuring public access to reliable, timely, clear and accurate information.
- The establishment of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for the continuous improvement of processes to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency.
- The development of relations with all stakeholders (university, administration, business world, Aragonese society) through the promotion of dialogue to ensure their satisfaction.

- The promotion of student participation in the Agency's activity and quality assurance processes.
- Cooperation with national and international higher education agencies and networks.
- Commitment to a job well done by the Agency's staff and its collaborators, associated with professionalism and honesty.
- Teamwork, based on respect and collaboration to achieve the best working environment.

## MAP OF PROCESSES





## STRATEGIC PROCESSES

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

Following the receipt of the approval of the ENQA evaluation follow-up report, ACPUA prepares the new strategic planning covering the period 2024-2027.

The development of the new Strategic Plan will be articulated through a participatory process involving all the Agency's stakeholders. The new Plan should lead the ACPUA to successfully pass the ENQA assessment during the year 2026.

### PARTICIPATION IN BODIES AND NETWORKS

#### International evaluation of ACPUA

Following its reform in 2015, and in order to comply with current European standards (ESG), the LOSUA stipulates that the ACPUA must undergo an international assessment every 5 years. This assessment requires accreditation of compliance with each and every one of the ESG, is conducted by ENQA and only if the resulting report is favourable can the ACPUA be registered in the official EQAR Register of Agencies, which certifies its status as an accredited European agency. In turn, being registered in this European organisation is a prerequisite for exercising all the powers granted by Spanish legislation to the regional agencies in the field of university quality and evaluation.

ACPUA passed its first international evaluation by ENQA in 2016 and passed its second international evaluation in 2021. ACPUA therefore remains a full member of ENQA until 2026 and continues to be listed in the European Register of EQAR Agencies.

In June 2023, ACPUA presented the **Follow up Report**, which is the Follow up Report of its evaluation reflecting the progress and actions implemented by ACPUA in response to the recommendations made in the previous evaluation report.

In addition, the strategic lines of ACPUA in its 2019-22 Strategic Plan gave an essential role to internationalisation. Therefore, in 2023 ACPUA certified the alignment of our evaluation criteria and activities with the Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP) through the international network of university quality agencies INQAAHE.

With these actions, **ACPUA is fully aligned with international and European compliance with the quality standards promoted by the two most relevant higher education organisations INQAAHE and ENQA.**

The renewal of ACPUA in 2021 has a duration of 5 years, so it is expected that in June 2026 we will have obtained the third review. After two renewals, the ENQA evaluation model is modified and a so-called "targeted review" is carried out. Therefore, during the year 2024, ACPUA will document and train in the definition and requirements of this new system.

#### ACPUA + INTERNATIONAL Programme

The ACPUA+INTERNACIONAL programme strategically gathers and systematises the Agency's internationalisation actions. The 2021 ENQA evaluation report commends the

ACPUA "for involving international experts in all programme reaccreditation reviews" (ESG 2.4).

The following activities are maintained during 2024:

a) Active participation of the Agency (attendance at webinars and forums, participation in General Assemblies, as well as involvement in projects) in the **international university quality bodies and networks** of which it is a member: ENQA, EQAR, INQAAHE and ECA.

Dates and venues for the ENQA Forum (April in Hannover) and the INQAAHE General Assembly (June in Romania) are already set.

In addition, an active collaboration as an associate partner in the following projects is already defined for the year 2024:

- the **Alliance of European Universities UNITA-Universitas montium**, of which the University of Zaragoza is a member in collaboration with 11 other universities in the European Higher Education Area. The role of the ACPUA has been defined as Associate Partner and also assuming the Vice-Presidency of the Quality Evaluation Board (QEB) group of Quality Agencies.
- Collaboration with the Italian agency ANVUR involved in its **new Erasmus + project** (Associate Partner) with the aim of disseminating among Ibero-American countries the ALCAEUS Programme for the certification of university centres in relation to the 2030 Agenda. This project is currently being prepared for submission to the next call for proposals.
- Associate Partner of the University of Zaragoza in the **POCTEFA Interreg-Dual Transversalis** project, on dual university training in the cross-border territory between Spain and France, for a period of 3 years.

b) Proactivity of the ACPUA to participate in relevant **international projects**, such as the adherence to the Organisation of Ibero-American States for collaboration in the evaluation of online degrees (Kalos Seal) or the agreement with the Madrid+ Foundation for Knowledge in the evaluation of degrees (Sofia Seal), among other projects.

### DEQAR Project

In 2018 the ACPUA began to participate for the first time in its history in a funded European project, being the second Spanish agency to do so and one of the first 14 in the whole EHEA. It is a project sponsored by the European Union (Erasmus+) that coordinates the European Register of University Quality Assurance Agencies EQAR. Its aim is to implement a **European database of university education on the basis of the results and contents of external evaluations conducted by the quality agencies registered in EQAR**. In recent years, the DEQAR database has grown exponentially and is now a reference document repository on university quality for the European Union, which has become particularly relevant with the launch of the European Universities Initiative.

In 2024, all final degree and institution evaluation reports issued by the Agency will continue to be submitted for publication in DEQAR.

## Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (COARA)

The ACPUA, on the initiative of its Governing Board, became a full member of the coalition on 12 June 2023 with the signing of the **Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment**.

The **agreement**, based on 10 commitments, sets a common direction for research evaluation reform, while respecting the autonomy of organisations. The Agreement on Research Evaluation Reform sets a shared direction for changes in research evaluation practices, researchers and research performing organisations, with the overall objective of maximising the quality and impact of research.

The Agreement includes principles, commitments and timelines for reforms and sets out the principles for a Coalition of organisations willing to work together to implement the changes.

As a member of this coalition, the ACPUA will actively participate in the events and activities proposed as part of its commitment to research evaluation reform, in order to transfer the progress made to the Agency's evaluation processes.

## SPANISH NETWORK OF QUALITY AGENCIES (REACU)

The Director of ACPUA will hold the Technical Secretariat of the Network of Spanish Quality Agencies during the year 2024 and, among her functions, will coordinate and promote the common work carried out by the Agencies, as well as convening meetings of the General Assembly.

The ACPUA shall convene at least one meeting of the General Assembly every quarter, and the meeting for the second half of the year shall be held in person at the headquarters of the ACPUA.

On the other hand, as Technical Secretary of REACU, the Director of ACPUA will coordinate the meetings with the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. These meetings have, among other objectives, the exchange of information, consultations and new proposals with the Secretary General of Universities, the Subdirector General of Degrees and Coordination of the European Directive on the Recognition of Qualifications and the Organisation of University Education and Teaching Staff. The meetings that are convened periodically or at the request of the REACU Agencies bring together the Directors and, when the occasion arises, the technical staff of the Agencies.

## STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

### ACPUA + STUDENTS Programme

This programme, launched at the end of 2014, aims to actively integrate students and their point of view in the daily work of the agency through three axes: their participation in the different bodies and panels, their training in quality assurance and active communication with the student body.

Specifically, its objectives are:

- Integration of students into the ACPUA structure.



- Student participation in ACPUA evaluation activities.
- Cooperation and stable relations with the student councils and associations of the institutions of the University System of Aragon.
- Training students in the main evaluation processes.
- Quality culture: student awareness of Quality Agencies.
- Common understanding of student needs (student-centred learning).

In 2023, the results of the ACPUA Learns Report nº9 "Post-COVID Strategic Forum" were disseminated, sharing the Decalogue of recommendations drawn up by the students themselves from the two universities of Aragon. As a novelty, a new university guidance tool was presented, which has been disseminated among the guidance counsellors of all the educational centres in Aragon.

In 2024, the dissemination of previous work will continue and new activities that improve the quality of life and mental health of the student body will be assessed in order to follow the recommendations of the Decalogue, reducing the social and psychological gap, empowering university students and promoting international mobility, among other aspects.

We will continue to work on the training of students, on their collaboration with ACPUA and on their participation in activities related to evaluation and quality, in particular, specific training will be provided so that they know how to become part of the Bank of ACPUA evaluators; activities that promote and are aligned with the fulfilment of the European ESG standards.

Communication and collaboration with university student representatives, not only from Aragonese universities but also with national associations such as CREUP, will also be intensified in terms of the quality of teaching.

Collaboration will continue with the University of Zaragoza, hosting trainees from the Faculty of Law.

### **ACPUA + SOCIETY Programme**

This programme was conceived in 2017 to respond to the recommendations made in the 2016 ENQA evaluation report, as almost all of them converged on the need for ACPUA to increase the involvement of external stakeholders (mainly in evaluation panels and committees and in the design of protocols and procedures). In the recent ENQA report of 2021, stakeholder participation and involvement in the Agency's activities is no longer the subject of both recommendations and commendations (Commendations ESG 3.6 and ESG 2.2.), which means that the programme is working.

During 2024 the ACPUA+Society Programme will continue to advance and implement its objectives:

- Integration of external stakeholders (professionals, industry, society) into the ACPUA structure.
- Involvement of external stakeholders (professionals, industry, society) in ACPUA evaluation activities.

- Joint commitment to the social dimension of quality and sustainability (achievement of the SDGs).
- Cooperation and stable relations with business associations, trade unions, professional associations, foundations and associations, chambers of commerce and economic sectors in Aragon.
- Raising awareness of the ACPUA's mission and actions among Aragonese society.
- Common understanding of innovation in Higher Education, technological changes and labour market needs.

In 2023, we participated in two specific activities: the international seminar coordinated by the Italian agency ANVUR on social impact in which the Spanish Red Cross in Zaragoza took part, and the collaboration in a research project with the University of Zaragoza on foster care, specifically with the association ADAFAFA, which will continue during 2024.

### **Maintaining the Agency's commitment to sustainability and Agenda 2030**

Since 2015, the ACPUA has renewed its **commitment to the 2030 Agenda**, specifically with the **United Nations Global Compact** in Spain and with the **United Nations Global Compact** organisation based in New York.

In order to maintain these objectives of commitment, visibility and effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Agency issues the so-called COE or **Engagement Communication** in which we state the following aspects every two years:

- **Part I. Statement of continuing endorsement by the Executive Director** or equivalent position. In the 2023 communication (due for renewal from 1 March 2023 to 1 March 2025), we describe the steps taken by our organisation to support the UN Global Compact and its principles. We are also committed to sharing this information with our stakeholders through our main communication channels, as we have been doing for the past two years, mainly through our website and social media.
- **Part II. Description of measures.** In 2023, ACPUA maintains and strengthens actions that it had already been carrying out, such as the application of a Code of Ethics based on "**Corporate Social Responsibility**", signed by all members and collaborators of the agency and which includes the highest ethical, professional and integrity standards. This Code of Ethics is published on our website, as an example of the principle of transparency that governs the agency's activities. It describes the measures that the ACPUA has been adopting and maintains at present, such as the organisation of seminars, conferences and other actions related to the principles of the UN Global Compact.
- **Part III. Measuring results in 2023.** Following our criteria of transparency and credibility, the final design of the evaluation protocol of the ALCAEUS Programme and the reports of the two ACCREDITED university centres are already available on the ACPUA website, as well as on the European DEQAR register.

In 2023, **ACPUA renewed this commitment until 2025, but also joined the Aragonese Alliance for the 2030 Agenda**, which aims to make visible and promote shared efforts in the Autonomous Community of Aragon in this area and to award a distinctive Seal. In addition,

ACPUA applied for the "Go!ODS Awards" organised by the Global Compact Spanish Network and the Rafael del Pino Foundation.

In 2024, the commitments contained in the reports of the regional, national and international alliances of which the Agency is a member are expected to be maintained, as well as the preparation of the renewal of the commitment scheduled for March 2025.

### **ACPUA Programme \* EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Within its scope of action, the ACPUA has been working for some years now to promote gender equality, to reduce the gender gap in higher education and to introduce gender mainstreaming.

From the specific point of view of the introduction of the gender perspective, methodologies and information on diagnostic elements and evaluation indicators have also been exchanged with Spanish agencies particularly committed to equality issues, such as AQU Catalunya and UNIBASQ, as well as at European level with the Netherlands and Flemish Agency NVAO, and participation in workshops on the social dimension of quality with the Italian National Agency ANVUR.

Since 2018, the ACPUA has included in its Activity Reports a report on gender parity and equality in the composition of the Agency's committees and panels. In 2019, a new impetus was given to the evaluative perspective of this commitment to equality thanks to the aforementioned ALCAEUS Programme for the certification of centres according to the 2030 Agenda. In 2021, the new ACPUA technical committee (Subcommittee for Thematic Evaluations, SETE) was entrusted with the implementation of this strategic line.

Following these actions, in 2022, the launch of an ACPUA diversity seal was included in the planning of activities. During the year, work was carried out to establish the dimensions and sub-dimensions of evaluation, as well as the creation of a dynamic graphic that would make visible the efforts made by the university centres to respect this matter. As the main activity, it was decided that it was essential to draw up a document in which the right words were decided and unanimity was generated in the definitions of the terms corresponding to each of the dimensions described: gender, affective-sexual, disability and SEN (Specific Educational Support Needs), culture and religion, and social exclusion. For this purpose, an ad hoc survey was designed and sent to stakeholders previously selected for their knowledge on the subject.

In the first quarter of 2023, the ACPUA published the final report with the results of the aforementioned survey. This report, which forms part of the ACPUA Learns series of publications No. 11 and is entitled "**Guide to diversity terms**", is the first step in the work to launch this diversity label.

In 2024, it is foreseen that reports on gender parity and equality in the composition of the Agency's committees and panels will continue to be carried out, also taking into account the evaluative perspective of this commitment to equality through the ALCAEUS Programme for the certification of centres, as well as other actions that may arise in relation to the report on graduates or those derived from the planned strategic planning.

## OPERATIONAL PROCESSES

### DEGREE EVALUATION

#### Verification and modification of curricula

The verification of a curriculum is the process of ex ante evaluation of official studies in Spain. The ACPUA has been acting as a verifying agency since July 2017 (after being registered in the European Register of EQAR Agencies at the end of 2016). This process is the first evaluative step in the creation of a new degree, and requires universities to draw up a verification report setting out the project for a degree programme.

The ex ante assessment of degrees assesses the suitability of the degree project, the coherence of the syllabus and the adequacy of the resources with which the degree will be endowed. Once the verification report has been approved by the competent agency (and the implementation of the degree has been authorised by the regional government), this document becomes the "contract" that the universities sign with society and becomes the reference document for subsequent evaluations.

It is in this process where the justification, the appropriateness of the degree, the syllabus, the learning outcomes to be obtained and the material and human resources that are going to be put at the service of this degree are approved. It had been governed by a Royal Decree (R.D. 1393/2007), which had been subject to numerous modifications.

With the publication of Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance, the legal framework for the verification and modification of degrees was considerably modified, bringing important new developments.

The ACPUA's **verification and assessment of modifications** is always open and deals with all requests from both universities that come from the Council of Universities and comply with the requirements, deadlines and procedures established by the Directorate General for Universities of the Government of Aragon.

#### Monitoring and renewal of degree accreditation

Following the entry into force of the new R.D. 822/2021 (see A2.1), the ACPUA has yet to **review the degree monitoring process**. In this process of revision and improvement of the procedure, the Agency will connect, for reasons of coherence and efficiency in evaluation, the monitoring of degrees with the monitoring of institutional accreditation, when designing an efficient, user-friendly but effective model of post-accreditation monitoring of degrees.

In relation to the **renewal of the accreditation of degree programmes** in 2024, the degree programmes that must undergo this evaluation process all belong to the University of Zaragoza and are as follows:

- University Master's Degree in Initiation to Research in Nursing Sciences (Faculty of Health Sciences)<sup>1</sup>
- Master's Degree in General Health Psychology (Faculty of Social and Human Sciences)
- Graduate in Veterinary Medicine (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine)
- University Master's Degree in Lifelong Learning: Initiation to Research (Faculty of Education)
- Master's Degree in Tourism Management and Planning (Faculty of Business and Public Management)
- University Master's Degree in Social Gerontology (Faculty of Health Sciences)<sup>2</sup>
- Master's Degree in Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training, Language, Arts and Sports Teaching (Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Education, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences).

### Approval and follow-up of artistic education

The current regulations governing the provision of Arts Education in Spain make the authorisation of Masters in this field conditional on passing an ex-ante evaluation process, known as "homologation" and carried out by the university quality agencies.

The ACPUA carries out the evaluation of official Master's degree courses in parallel to official university courses, as part of the degree evaluation programmes, applying the same evaluation protocols (taking into account the specificities of this type of degree). The documentation is published on the Agency's website.

The ACPUA will keep open this evaluation programme for the accreditation, monitoring and renewal of the accreditation of Master's degrees in artistic education throughout the year 2024.

## SITE EVALUATION

### IACS Certification - PACE Programme (New: Doctoral Schools).

During the year 2023, and in the light of the Resolution of 3 March 2022, of the General Secretariat of Universities mentioned above, the ACPUA will review the PACE - SIGC Programme for its adaptation to the new regulations, incorporating **as a new feature** (as included in the new legislation) the particularities of this type of evaluation for **its application to Doctoral Schools**.

With regard to the evaluations to be carried out under the PACE Programme, and given that this evaluation may be requested at any time during the year, the **evaluation for the**

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<sup>1</sup> Pending institutional accreditation of the Centre

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certification of the Internal Quality Assurance System of the centres that request it will be carried out.

### Institutional accreditation

The legal framework for institutional accreditation was modified in 2021 with the enactment of Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres and the publication of the Resolution of 3 March 2022, of the General Secretariat for Universities, issuing instructions on the procedure for the institutional accreditation of public and private university centres, and publishing the Protocol for the certification of internal quality assurance systems of university centres and the Protocol for the assessment procedure for the renewal of the institutional accreditation of university centres, approved by the General Conference on University Policy.

The ACPUA must **develop its own protocol for the monitoring and renewal of institutional accreditation** by 2024.

In the Aragonese University System, the USJ has accredited all its centres and the UZ already has institutional accreditation for a good number of centres, particularly those offering a greater number of degrees, so that institutional accreditation is at an advanced stage of implementation in the system.

During 2024, the ACPUA will **issue the corresponding evaluation report** when requested by the university for a Faculty or School that has already obtained PACE certification of its IACS.

In addition, the School of Engineering and Architecture of the UZ will be the first centre to face the **renewal of institutional accreditation**, before 27/11/2024, followed by the Higher Polytechnic School (EPSH) which should start the process at the end of 2024 to finalise the process before 28/02/2025.

### Certification of merits of dedication and teaching (University of Zaragoza)

The ACPUA will continue with the process of certifying the merits of dedication and teaching at the University of Zaragoza as established in the programme contract signed by the Government of Aragon and the University of Zaragoza for the payment of additional allowances for teaching staff (ORDER PIC/1931/2023, of 22 December, which provides for the publication of the General Contract-Programme between the Government of Aragon and the University of Zaragoza, for the allocation and financing of additional salary complements linked to individual merits of the Teaching and Research Staff of the University of Zaragoza, during the period 2024-2026.).

### DOCENTIA Programme

The DOCENTIA Programme is a programme developed by ANECA in collaboration with the other Spanish quality assurance agencies, the aim of which is to support universities in designing their own mechanisms for assessing the quality of their teaching staff's teaching activities.

The ACPUA's participation in the programme is twofold:

- On the one hand, the ACPUA is part of the DOCENTIA Commission in charge of the development and monitoring of the programme. This commission is made up of technicians from the agencies in charge of the programme and meets several times a year.
- On the other hand, the ACPUA evaluates the implementation of DOCENTIA in the universities of the Aragonese university system.

During the year 2021, and at the initiative of ANECA, the programme was updated. The ACPUA participated in this task from the technical commission, which includes technicians from the different agencies. Subsequently, a new model of collaboration agreement between ANECA and each regional agency was discussed within REACU.

During 2024, ACPUA will sign this agreement in order to be able to continue with the evaluations eventually requested by both universities.

### Certification of internships in schools

The powers attributed to the ACPUA with regard to the monitoring and accreditation of official university education enable it to ensure the proper development of the internships offered in its syllabuses.

In this sense, university teacher training includes in the different syllabuses the compulsory completion of curricular internships in educational centres. For this reason, the Government of Aragon is developing agreements with universities so that university students can carry out work placements in the Bachelor's Degrees in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education and in the Master's Degree in Teaching.

This activity, which began for the first time in 2014, both for pre-school, primary and secondary schools, has succeeded in creating a certified and stable network of university internship centres.

In 2022, the ACPUA carried out for the first time a survey in collaboration with the Directorate General for Innovation and Vocational Training of Education of the Government of Aragon in which the need to provide information to schools about this activity, mainly to secondary schools, was detected.

Therefore, in June 2023, an online training session entitled: Pre-university quality: ACPUA certification was held and successfully repeated in 2023. In this session, the Agency presented the data corresponding to the evaluation, as well as the explanation of the evaluation protocol used and other aspects related to educational guidance or infographics that help in the vocational guidance of students.

At the end of the evaluation task, the ACPUA Diploma and the ACPUA Seal together with its User Manual are sent to all accredited schools.

**In order to consolidate this stable network** of schools in which students can develop their internships, ACPUA **will continue** in 2024 **with this activity of certifying schools** that successfully host university students on internships, maintaining online training to all schools on ACPUA Certification and on all the programmes that ACPUA develops for the proper transition of students to higher education.

## Centres certified with the 2030 Agenda: the ALCAEUS programme

During 2018 the ACPUA actively participated in the international project S&QSHE (Sustainability & Quality in Higher Education) in collaboration with the Andorran agency AQUA. This was a pioneering initiative that received support and funding from the global network of university quality assurance agencies INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education). This project was developed mainly during 2019 and its main result was the development of a proposal of indicators for universities to introduce sustainability criteria, connecting this proposal with institutional assessment processes.

Participation in this international project not only made it possible to go hand in hand with Aragonese universities in the promotion of university commitment to the SDGs, but also encouraged the agency to develop its own programme, also unprecedented and pioneering both nationally and internationally, for the monitoring and certification of university centres according to their level of commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. This programme, which was presented to the REACU agencies during a conference organised by the ACPUA and to foreign agencies through the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), is called ALCAEUS. To the best of the ACPUA's knowledge, it is the first concrete contribution to the SDGs in Europe from the external quality assurance sector.

Following the open and voluntary call for the pilot evaluation, two institutionally accredited Aragonese universities applied:

- School of Engineering and Architecture (U. of Zaragoza)
- Higher Polytechnic School (U. of Zaragoza)

The evaluation was carried out **according to the ALCAEUS evaluation protocol** and ended with the 2030 Certification of these centres, making visible with a Seal their firm commitment to the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**In 2022, the meta-evaluation of the ALCAEUS programme was carried out**, of great importance for this programme, which has led to the modification of some aspects and the introduction of the necessary and relevant improvements in the final protocol. That same year, the final protocol of the ALCAEUS Programme was perfectly defined and its inclusion among the activities registered in EQAR was approved, and the reports of this evaluation are published in the European database DEQAR. From there, the dissemination of the project has been promoted at national and international level.

During the year **2024**, the ACPUA plans to disseminate the Programme, as well as to train assessors. The target audience of these dissemination actions will be both individuals interested in becoming expert evaluators of the Agenda 2030 for the certification of university centres and institutions in the field of higher education.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH

### Evaluation of University Research Institutes

#### Evaluation for the creation

According to art. 15 of the LOSUA, the Government of Aragon is responsible for the creation, suppression and assignment of the University Research Institutes, following a report by the ACPUA. Consequently, in **2024, the Agency would launch this evaluation procedure in the case of a proposal for the creation of a new Institute.**

#### Periodic evaluation every 5 years

The ACPUA evaluates the existing University Research Institutes in Aragon every 5 years. During 2024, the evaluation protocol will be reviewed, taking into account its integration with the evaluation for their funding carried out by the Directorate General for Science and Innovation. Once the review has been completed, the evaluation process of nine of the institutes will be launched.

- University Institute for Engineering Research in Aragón (I3A)
- University Research Institute for Biocomputing and Physics of Complex Systems (BIFI)
- University Institute of Nanoscience Research of Aragón (INA)
- University Institute for Research in Mathematics and Applications (IUMA)
- University Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences of Aragón (IUCA)
- Joint University Research Institute Centre for Research on Energy Resources and Consumption (CIRCE)
- Joint University Research Institute of Chemical Synthesis and Homogeneous Catalysis (ISQCH)
- Joint Research Institute of Materials Science of Aragón (ICMA)
- Mixed Agri-Food University Research Institute of Aragón (IA2)
- University Institute for Research in Heritage and Humanities (IPH)

## ASSESSMENT OF PERSONS

### Evaluation of research activity (six-year periods)

By virtue of the aforementioned Agreement and contract-programme between the Government of Aragon and the University of Zaragoza (see A1.4), the ACPUA has been carrying out the evaluation of the research activity of the contracted teaching staff of the University of Zaragoza aimed at obtaining the research merit complement.

Gradually in previous years, this evaluation process was opened up to other groups of researchers working in other centres: CUD Zaragoza, CITA, EUPLA, IACS, ETUZ (in a different call than the one addressed to contracted teaching staff of the University of Zaragoza to obtain the aforementioned complement).

This is an individualised evaluation of the research activity carried out by the aforementioned teaching and research staff over a period of six years of their research activity (sexenios),

applying the same criteria as those used at national level for civil servant staff by the CNEAI and by means of an annual call for applications.

The University of Zaragoza has established an agreement with the CNEAI for the evaluation of non-civil servant staff in which in 2024 all the figures of full-time contracted lecturers have been included, so it has been decided to remove these figures from the ACPUA evaluation in order to avoid double evaluation.

Therefore, from 2024 onwards, the ACPUA will evaluate the research staff (in the figures determined by the UZ) in addition to the teaching and research staff of the affiliated centres and other entities.

### **Assessment for the accreditation of contract teaching staff with clinical attachment**

Decree 206/2018, of 21 November, legally introduced in Aragon the figure of the Hired Doctoral Professor with Clinical Attachment (PCDVC) to the Aragonese Public Health System (SALUD). This new contracting figure establishes, among other prerequisites, a positive accreditation by the ACPUA.

The Programme provides for an annual call for applications, with the third call for applications having been launched at the end of 2023. The evaluation of the applications received will be closed during the first quarter of 2024.

## **EVALUATOR MANAGEMENT**

### **ACPUA Bank of Evaluators**

During 2023, the ACPUA has developed a new application for the collection of data from potential evaluators. Once the IT development is completed by the end of 2023, the new bank will be publicised to the university community in the first quarter of 2024. The necessary actions will be planned to publicise the ACPUA and its activities, increasing the number of experts registered in the bank of evaluators.

### **Assignment of evaluators**

The ACPUA, as part of its objective of collaboration with the entities of the system, provides data on evaluators from its bank to universities or institutions that require experts to carry out evaluations on the quality of their activities.

This line of collaboration, upon request, will remain open through 2024.

## **FORESIGHT STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

### **Studies on labour market insertion: Graduate monitoring project**

Among the functions of the ACPUA entrusted by Law 5/2005, of 14 June, on the Organisation of the University System of Aragon, is that of "monitoring the labour market insertion of graduates". With this objective, in 2015 a Framework Agreement was signed between the



Government of Aragon (ACPUA and the Aragonese Institute of Statistics, IAEST), the Social Council of the University of Zaragoza, the University of Zaragoza and the University of San Jorge, in order to promote a periodic survey aimed at assessing and analysing the labour market outcomes of graduates of the University System of Aragon (SUA).

For the development of this project, a working group was set up, led by the Social Council of the University of Zaragoza and in which all the signatory entities of the Agreement are represented: Directorate General of Universities of the Government of Aragon, ACPUA, IAEST, UZ, USJ and the Social Council of the UZ itself. Its work resulted in the first Survey on labour market insertion of graduates of the University System of Aragon (cohort 2013/2014). This survey was exploited by the Aragonese Institute of Statistics (IAEST) and subsequently allowed the study of the main variables under analysis by each of the participating institutions.

Following the signing in 2019 of an addendum to this agreement, in 2021 the Social Council, the ACPUA and the other entities completed the work of preparing the second survey (on the 2016/2017 cohort), the results of which were presented in March 2023 and incorporated into the Report on **"The Insertion of undergraduate graduates of the University System of Aragon: Cohort 2016-2017"**.

As a continuation of these actions and on the occasion of the publication of the results of this survey, it is the agency's intention to hold an **"Insertion Data Day" with students and graduates** in 2024. The aim is for the information to contribute not only to providing the system with evidence, but also to promote its knowledge and use among students and graduates. To this end, the aim is to establish bridges with these groups (through focus groups or workshops) that allow us to know the usability of this information and broaden the knowledge of the needs of students in the transition to the labour market.

In addition, meetings to assess the continuation of these studies will continue with all the actors involved.

### **Systematisation and dissemination of Thematic Analyses**

According to the European ESG 3.4. standard, agencies "must publish reports describing and analysing the overall results of their external quality assurance activities". The ACPUA has been consolidating this activity, publishing periodically on its website various studies of this type (cross-cutting competences on SDGs, results of evaluations of similar degrees within the SUA, identification of good practices, etc.). In 2023, two new reports on alumni and on equality and diversity were added to the "ACPUA learns" series.

Finally, the announced follow-up plan to the ENQA recommendations (see A2.4) should include **an action to develop** "a more systematic and deeper approach to the analysis of findings from its evaluation processes, and expand its research activities to provide reports that discuss trends and developments at the level of the Aragon higher education system".

For all these reasons, work will continue in 2024 on the systematisation and dissemination of this type of analysis.

## SUPPORT FOR DECISION-MAKING IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

### Reports on request

The ACPUA will respond to requests for reports from the Directorate General for Universities on issues related to its area of management, as requested by the Directorate General for Universities.

## DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION OF QUALITY CULTURE

### ACPUA University Quality Seminars

This important activity of the ACPUA, an interdisciplinary meeting place and exchange of knowledge, methods and experiences around the great theme of the quality of higher education in Aragon, is an open forum for communication with society and the participation of the university community. This activity **will continue in 2024**.

The first action proposed is the launch of the new ACPUA Bank of evaluators as a fundamental part of the evaluation work of the Quality Agencies. The other themes will be defined according to the needs of national and international stakeholders.

## PROVISION OF EVALUATION SERVICES BY AGREEMENT/CONTRACT

### Certification of merits of the teaching staff of the University of Cantabria

At the request of the University of Cantabria and by means of an agreement formalising the management assignment, the ACPUA has been certifying the merits of the teaching staff of that university, for the purposes of the programme of salary complements for teaching and research staff of the University of Cantabria.

**This activity will continue in 2024**, following the signing of the corresponding agreement with the University of Cantabria in 2022 for the next four years.

### Evaluation of teaching merits of the teaching staff of the Universidad San Jorge

Inspired by state regulations on the remuneration of university teaching staff, San Jorge University has for some years now had a procedure for the recognition of its teaching staff by means of the evaluation of teaching merits in 5-year periods (five-year periods of teaching excellence). At the university's request, this evaluation is carried out by a technical committee of experts appointed by the ACPUA.

In 2024, this activity will continue with the evaluation of the five-year teaching period of the teaching staff of the Universidad San Jorge.

## SUPPORT PROCESSES

### Adaptation of panels and committees to the Agency's new activity

The increasing activity - in terms of quantity, quality and diversity of processes and actions - obliges the ACPUA not only to renew the members of its committees but also to periodically reconsider the number and composition of its committees. This is to ensure that we are always in a position to deal more effectively and efficiently with our obligations. The actions foreseen for 2024 in this field are as follows:

- Restructuring the composition and activities of the **ACPUA Monitoring Committee**.
- Assignment of new functions to the **Sub-Commission on Thematic Evaluations (SETE)**.
- Renewal of members of the different **Sub-Commissions**.

### Improved compliance with European standards

The Agency's internal quality system will continue in 2024 with a focus on **improving feedback between committees and evaluation panels**, in line with the ENQA evaluation report in relation to the European ESG 3.5 standard.

In relation to the European ESG 2.7 standard, in 2024 the ACPUA Assurance Committee will work on drafting **a specific procedure for breaches of the Agency's Code of Ethics**.

## GLOSSARY

- ACSUCYL: Castilla y León University System Quality Agency.
- ACSUG: Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System
- ANECA: Agencia Nacional de la Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation).
- ANVUR: Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (National Agency for the Valuation of the University and Research System)
- AQU: Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System
- AVAP: Agència Valenciana d'Avaluació i Prospectiva (Valencian Assessment and Foresight Agency)
- CNEAI: Comisión Nacional de Evaluación de la Actividad Investigadora (National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity).
- CREUP: Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (Coordinating Committee of Students' Representatives of Public Universities)
- CUD: Centre Universitaire de la Défense
- DEQAR: The Database of External Quality Assurance Results
- DEVA-AAC: Directorate of Evaluation and Accreditation - Andalusian Agency of Knowledge.
- ECA: European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education
- EHEA: European Higher Education Area
- ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQAR: The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
- ESG: European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area
- FCM: Foundation for Knowledge madrimasd (Section for Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation of the Quality of Higher Education)
- IAEST: Aragonese Institute of Statistics
- INQAAHE: International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- LOSUA: Law 5/2005, of 14 June, on the Organisation of the University System of Aragon.
- PCDVC: Professor with Clinical Attachment
- REACU: Spanish Network of University Quality Assurance Agencies
- SETE: ACPUA Sub-Committee on Thematic Evaluations
- IQMS: Internal Quality Management System of the ACPUA
- SUA: Aragonese University System

UNIBASQ: Agency for the Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation of the Basque University System

USJ: San Jorge University

UZ: University of Zaragoza