

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW

FUNDACIÓN PARA EL CONOCIMIENTO MADRIMASD (madri+d)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This targeted review analyses the compliance of the Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d (henceforth madri+d) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015 parts 2 and 3) following the methodology described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews. It is the agency's third review coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and its first targeted review. The Foundation has been a member of ENQA since March 2015 and has been listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since June 2015. The purpose of the review is to confirm madri+d's compliance with the ESG in order to renew the agency's membership in ENQA and its registration in EQAR. This external review report is based on a review process that uses the agency's self-assessment report, the information published on the agency's website and the information gathered during the site visit by the ENQA-appointed review panel on September 24th to 26th 2024.

madri+d is one of ten agencies for external quality assurance of higher education in Spain but the only one specifically operating in the Madrid region. The agency operates as a foundation established in 2002 on the initiative of the Regional Government of Madrid. Decree 63/2014, of 29 May 2014 designates the Foundation as the official assessment body for the Madrid Higher Education System. The agency's objective is to contribute to the improvement of higher education by means of evaluation activities leading to accreditation and quality certification in the university environment of Madrid. The mission of madri+d is stated in the Articles of Association: "The Foundation's goal is to contribute to converting the quality in Higher Education, science, technology and innovation into a key element in the competitiveness and wellbeing of the citizens".

Since the last full external review against ESG in 2019, madri+d has reported to EQAR substantial changes related to revision of a current procedure and implementation of new ones in 2023 and 2024. According to the 2024 Terms of Reference, this targeted review has evaluated to what extent madri+d continues to fulfil the requirements of the following ESG's:

- ESG 2.1 has been addressed for all madri+d's activities within the scope of ESG.
- ESG's 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6 have been addressed for the new scope of SISCAL, which now includes the certification of university centres that teach doctoral programmes and university centres that manage non-official programmes.
- ESG's 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 have been addressed for the new activities CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA.

This report further addresses the ESG standards where madri+d was judged as partially compliant by the EQAR Register Committee during the previous full review in 2019, namely ESG 2.6 Reporting, ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis and 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.

Additionally the panel considered ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts, which was the agency's self-selected enhancement area.

The panel finds madri+d compliant on all addressed ESGs.

The panel is convinced that in recent years madri+d has successfully established and further developed its role as a reliable and trustworthy partner in supporting the quality enhancement of the higher education institutions in the Madrid region. The panel hopes that its analyses and recommendations will support madri+d in continuing to carry out their responsibilities to the satisfaction of stakeholders in the region and further afield.

Summarised, the panel reached the following conclusions in respect of compliance with the ESG (2015) Standards and Guidelines:

Summary of agency's compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3)

ESG	Compliance according to the targeted review ¹	Compliance transferred from the last full review ²
2.1	Compliant	N/A
2.2	Compliant (for new or changed QA activities only)	Substantial compliance → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.3	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.4	Compliant (for new QA activities only) Included in the targeted review as a self-selected enhancement area	Substantial compliance → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.5	Compliant (for new or changed QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.6	Compliant	N/A
2.7	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Substantial compliance → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
3.1	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.2	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.3	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.4	Compliant	N/A
3.5	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.6	Compliant	N/A
3.7	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant

¹ Compliance refers to the focus areas that were evaluated in depth and are part of the Terms of Reference, i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, ESG Part 2 for newly introduced or changed QA activities of the agency, ESG 2.1 for all QA activities and any standard affected by substantive changes since the last full review. If any of the standards of Part 2 of the ESG are covered due to the newly introduced or changed QA activities, a remark "for new or changed QA activities only" is added in brackets to the compliance assessment.

² Compliance refers to the last EQAR Register Committee decision for renewal of inclusion on the Register, or in case when an agency is not renewing its registration in EQAR, compliance refers to the last ENQA Agency Review report and should its judgement differ from that of the panel, the judgement of the ENQA Board, as stipulated in the membership decision letter by the ENQA Board. Compliance refers to the QA activities of the agency that were reviewed during the previous full review.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of madri+d, Fundación para el Conocimiento madrimasd (madri+d) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted in January 2024 to February 2025 and should be read together with the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

Registration on EQAR is the official instrument established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for demonstrating an agency's ESG compliance. An external review is a prerequisite for registration.

As madri+d has undergone two successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, it is eligible and has opted for a targeted review. The purpose of a targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by covering standards that were found partially compliant during the agency's last renewal of registration in EQAR in 2020 and on standards that could have been affected by substantive changes³ during the past five years while at the same time further strengthening the enhancement part of the review.

This targeted review and the findings of the panel are used for renewal of both madri+d's ENQA membership and its listing on EQAR.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

According to the ToR, madri+d carries out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Accreditation of official degree programmes
- Assessment of the programmes' development plan
- CUALIFICAM programme
- DOCENTIA
- Ex-ante evaluation of master programmes in the arts
- Institutional Accreditation
- Joint programme evaluation
- Modification of official degree programmes
- Monitoring of official degree programmes
- SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification
- SOFIA programme
- Validation (ex-ante accreditation) of official degree programmes.

The following activities of madri+d are not included in the review as they are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Consultancy

³ e.g. organisational changes, the launch of new external QA activities.

- Peer-review based assessments of grant proposals
- Scientific Culture and Communication Area
- Technology Transfer and European ProgrammesArea
- Technology Based Entrepreneurship Area.

This report also deals with each of the focus areas below (ToR, pages 2-3):

A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:

- ESG 2.6 due to absence of publication of the reports resulting from the assessments of institutions' programmes development plans
- ESG 3.4 due to lack of publication of thematic analyses as understood by the standard
- ESG 3.6 due to the need to demonstrate sufficiently how ESG compliance is assured when making decisions based on reports issued by external agencies not registered in EQAR.

B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:

- The SOFIA programme
- The CUALIFICAM programme

C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes:

- ESG 2.1 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology covers all the standards of ESG Part I in practice
- ESG 2.2 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology is fit for the new objectives
- ESG 2.5 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification standards are applied consistently.
- ESG 2.6 regarding whether all the reports resulting from the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology are published in full

D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;

E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 2.4.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2019 REVIEW

In 2020, the EQAR Register Committee based on the ENQA review report and further considerations concluded that madri+d demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Part 2 and 3) as follows:

ESG	Compliance in the last full review: Panel conclusion	Compliance in the last full review: EQAR Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	Compliance
2.2	Full compliance	Compliance
2.3	Full compliance	Compliance
2.4	Full compliance	Compliance

2.5	Full compliance	Compliance
2.6	Full compliance	Partial compliance
2.7	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.1	Full compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.5	Full compliance	Compliance
3.6	Full compliance	Partial compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

In 2023, the agency submitted to EQAR a substantive change report for introducing two new external quality assurance activities:

- a) The SOFIA programme – an activity for reviewing universities beyond the European Higher Education Area (EHEA);
- b) The CUALIFICAM programme – an activity for certifying programmes offered by business schools.

In 2024, the agency submitted to EQAR a substantive change report for the expansion of the methodology of the activity “SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification” and is now covering centres that teach doctoral programmes and university centres that manage non-official programmes. EQAR expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of madri+d 2024 renewal of registration, including:

- ESG 2.1: whether the agency’s updated guidelines cover all the standards of ESG Part I in practice.
- ESG 2.2: whether the updated standards are fit for the new objectives.
- ESG 2.5: whether the updated standards are consistently implemented.
- ESG 2.6: whether all the reports resulting from the “SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification” are published in full.

The review panel therefore acknowledges, in this report, the status of the ESG standards that were found to be in compliance with the ESG during the last full review, while at the same time addressing EQAR’s remarks regarding the changes in 2023 and 2024.

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2024 external targeted review of madri+d was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, the EQAR Procedures for Applications, and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the targeted review of madri+d was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Tue Vinther-Jørgensen (Chair), Assistant Manager at The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Denmark, QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Yvonne Overdeest, Senior Policy Officer Quality Assurance, The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), The Netherlands – Secretary, QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Carmen Fenoll, Full Professor of Plant Physiology, Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain – Academic (EUA nominee)
- Arnoldas Solovjovas, PhD studies in laser technologies, Vilnius University, Lithuania, student (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool).

Alexis Fábregas Almirall (ENQA Project and Reviews Officer), acted as the review coordinator.

The review took place from January 2024 to February 2025. The review panel received the SAR in May 2024 and on 15th July 2024 the first briefing meeting was held online. During this meeting the review panel was provided with input from the ENQA review coordinator and the EQAR representative Blazhe Todorovski. Other online meetings of the review panel took place on 2nd and 12th of September 2024.

The site visit was organised from 24th to 26th of September 2024 at madri+d's premises. Most of the participants attended the meetings face-to-face, however in some meetings online technologies were implemented. As a result of the outstanding technical arrangements (visual and sound equipment for both the online interviews and the equipment for translation), the hybrid meetings were as effective as the entirely face-to-face meetings.

The draft report was completed in November 2024 and sent to madri+d for a factual error check on 29 November 2024. madri+d's feedback on factual errors was received on 12 December 2024. The final review report was submitted to the ENQA's Agency Review Committee on 10 January 2025.

All decisions of the panel were taken by consensus. The panel affirms that it had access to all documents and stakeholders it wished to consult throughout the review. All the findings and conclusions of this review report are the joint opinion of the review panel and have been agreed on during the report drafting process.

Self-assessment report

The panel has been informed that the work on the Self-Assessment Report of the madri+d Foundation for Knowledge began in summer 2023, with exploratory contacts with ENQA and EQAR to formalise the renewal application in the Register and to discuss a review timeline and process.

In December 2023, the renewal application for registration in EQAR was submitted, and upon confirmation of the madri+d's eligibility in January 2024, the Terms of Reference for the external review were established among the three parties.

For the development of the Self-Assessment Report, the agency had established a working group coordinated by the Head of the Internal Quality Area and composed of the Director, the Secretary-General, and the Heads of the units in madri+d's Quality Area in Higher Education (QAHE). madri+d has emphasised that in the collection of data, indicators, and evidence, as well as in the reflective analysis, contributions from all technical staff of the agency were taken into account, along with data from satisfaction surveys and meta-evaluation of processes carried out periodically with stakeholders related to the agency's activities.

Once the draft document was completed, it was submitted to the Board of Trustees and the Advisory board of madri+d for comments and suggestions.

It should be noted that an error came to light in July 2024 in the ToR list of standards affected by substantive changes. Instead of ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes, ESG 2.3 Implementing processes was erroneously included regarding the SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification. As the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) had already been submitted, madri+d prepared a brief annex describing the compliance of this external quality assurance activity with ESG 2.5. The final version of the Tripartite Terms of Reference (ToR) was agreed on 2 September 2024. The panel was understanding of this situation and subsequently incorporated the new information into the procedure.

The SAR was well structured, clearly written and provided a comprehensive basis for the review. It was detailed in describing how madri+d had responded to legislative changes and challenges since 2019, about progress or revision of pre-existing activities and the development and implementation of new procedures. The SAR also made clear how the agency had responded to suggestions and recommendations from the previous review. A separate section was dedicated to the challenges and lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis.

Special attention was paid to the ESG compliance of the new activities and the activities with changes introduced since the agency's last full review against the ESG, as well as the enhancement area chosen by madri+d, ESG 2.4. The SAR also included links to all relevant additional documentation and information. Together with the additional documentation, the SAR provided a basis for conducting the targeted review.

Site visit

The programme of the visit (Annex I) was prepared jointly by the madri+d representative and the panel and was preceded by pre-visit / preparatory meetings, in line with the visit schedule (Annex I). The site visit took place from 24th to 26th of September 2024 in Madrid, at the office of the agency. The site visit was preceded by an online preparatory meeting between the panel and madri+d on 12th September 2024. The technical arrangements (visual and sound equipment for both the online interviews and the equipment for translation) enabled the review panel to conduct the interviews in a satisfactory manner.

During the site visit, the review panel met with management and staff of the agency as well as with the different stakeholders linked to madri+d's activities:

- representatives of the different agency governance levels: the Executive Management and the Board of Trustees;
- staff of the agency, including the technical staff of the Higher Education Verification and Modification Area, Monitoring Area, and Internal Quality Area;
- Regional Ministry representatives as well as representatives of Research, Technological Innovation and University bodies;
- representatives of the madri+d Advisory Committee and Advisory Council;
- heads and quality assurance officers of HEIs reviewed by madri+d;
- students and academic representatives from the reviewer pools;
- external stakeholders, including from the national student union, and representatives of work field bodies, social councils and trade unions, involved in the activities of the agency.

During the site visit two interpreters were on site to provide simultaneous translation.

The review panel was able to clarify pending issues with the CEO and the agency contact person during the last session. The madri+d premises were entirely appropriate for the site visit and were well-equipped for the interviews, both face-to-face and online. The madri+d staff were very helpful in providing additional information during the site visit when the need arose though naturally the panel made every effort to ensure their requests for additional information were absolutely necessary and in proportion to the effort required.

The panel would like to thank the madri+d team for their excellent organisation of the visit. The panel is grateful for all interviewees it met during the site visit who, in an open and constructive atmosphere, provided valuable input to support the panel in gaining a fair and accurate perspective of the agency and its relationship with its stakeholders.

CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The last full review was conducted based on the information gathered in the SAR (April 2019) and the site visit to madri+d (September 2019). Several changes to national legislation have since been introduced, amongst others the Royal Decree 822/2021 and the Royal Decree 640/2021, which make explicit the obligation to guarantee the quality of all the programmes taught, including non-official ones. This entails certain changes to existing procedures. The main changes coming from the new regulatory framework and affecting the agency in the scope of this review are the following:

- Update in the Institutional Accreditation of university centres conditions, to include those centres that provide doctoral programmes, while previous regulations included only centres that offered bachelor's and master's degrees.
- The requirement to guarantee the quality of all the programmes offered, both official and non-official, through internal quality assurance systems, which shall be certified by a quality assurance agency.

Royal Decree 420/2015, which required assessment of programmes' development plans of new centre and university proposals, was annulled in July 2021. Until then the Directorate of Universities of Madrid, the body responsible for issuing any resolution on these applications, had requested these assessment reports from madri+d. Although the current Royal Decree 640/2021 does not explicitly specify the need for this assessment by the agency, the Directorate of Universities will continue to request these non-binding reports from madri+d.

Regional legislation remains without change since the last review.

MADRI+D'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

The organisation of madri+d has not undergone any significant change since 2019. As then, it comprises four areas of activity: The Higher Education Quality Assurance Area (HEQAA), and three other independent areas involving fostering research, development, innovation, and scientific culture in the region of Madrid, as well as developing activities aimed at disseminating science, technology and education information to regional, national and international target groups. For the purposes of this targeted review, only that first area of activity, the HEQAA, specifically concerns the ESG and is the focus of this report.

MADRI+D'S FUNDING

There were no changes in madri+d's funding.

The agency is funded with public resources. It has an annual allocation of funds for its evaluation activities that is included in the general budget of the Regional Government of Madrid. This allocation is tied directly to the annual action plan of the agency, and the resources necessary for implementation. This allocation is adjusted annually according to the expected activities. In the last five years it has fluctuated from € 1,046,911 in 2019 to € 1,254,793 in 2023.

The two new quality assurance activities dating from 2022, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, that are offered respectively to business schools in Spain and universities in Ibero-America are financed by means of review fees. As madri+d is a non-profit organisation, these fees are calculated on the principle of covering only those expenses incurred, such as payment of experts, travel expenses and indirect costs.

The tables below, extracted from the SAR, show budget details.

Table 1 shows the budget directly assigned to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Area of madri+d over the past five years.

Year	Budget
2019	€ 1,046,911
2020	€ 831,605
2021	€ 1,069,312
2022	€ 1,024,166
2023	€ 1,254,793

Table 1 madri+d assignment to Higher Education Quality Assurance Area

Table 2 shows the income from the CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA programmes for the years 2022 and 2023.

Year	CUALIFICAM	Sello SOFIA
2022	€ 166,100	€ 14,250
2023	€ 211,800	€ 30,750

Table 2 Income resulting from service fees for CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA

In the event of unexpected expenses incurred, the agency has sufficient flexibility to reassign funds to ensure that evaluation processes continue to operate appropriately.

MADRI+D'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

The changes to madri+d's remit and responsibilities under the new regulations in the Spanish higher education and quality assurance by Royal Decrees are covered above. The impact of these additional responsibilities has only had a significant impact on one of madri+d's existing quality assurance activities.

Since the previous ENQA review in 2019 this one existing procedure has been revised and two new procedures developed and implemented:

- The 2018 SISCAL madri+d programme for the internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) certification of university centres was last revised in 2023, and its scope has been broadened to include the certification of centres that teach doctoral programmes and to the centres of the universities that manage the non-official programmes.
- New external quality assurance activities were introduced, namely CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA.

CUALIFICAM is a procedure developed in 2021 by madri+d in cooperation with an association of business schools, the Asociación Española de Escuelas de Negocios, AEEN, to certify the quality of Professional Master Programmes. This is a voluntary programme, open to Spanish Business Schools with headquarters in Spain, and operating both within and outside the Madrid region, piloted in 2022.

Sello SOFIA is a university accreditation programme aimed at institutions in the Ibero-American Higher Education Area, developed in 2022 and subsequently piloted in 2023.

Scope of activity

Since the last ENQA review the Madrid HE system has grown, with the addition of five universities. The three universities that were authorised in 2019, Universidad Internacional Villanueva, CUNEF Universidad, and ESIC Universidad, have commenced operations. Two other new universities were authorised in recent years: Universidad Internacional de la Empresa, UNIE, in 2020 and Universidad de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología, UDIT, in 2022. This brings the scope of madri+d to six public and twelve private universities.

Impact of Covid-19

The madri+d SAR details changes in the wider landscape of higher education and in quality assurance that have affected the agency and ways it has responded. As with every other nation and educational system worldwide, madri+d needed to provide an adequate response to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. madri+d's challenge was twofold: implementing teleworking for the organisation and facilitating digitalisation processes for activities in the Higher Education Quality Assurance Area (HEQAA).

As well as having moved evaluation activities online, madri+d reflected on the period and lessons learned with [a thematic analysis](#), published in 2021, of the impact of COVID-19 on teaching, learning and assessment.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF madri+d WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

2019 review: partially compliant

The panel recommends that the agency conducts more thematic analysis and focus on smaller areas instead of big ones so that it can be useful.

The panel recommends that the agency publishes reports of thematic analysis every year.

The panel specifically recommended that the agency “publishes reports of thematic analysis every year” whereas the ESG requires that such analyses be published “regularly” and does not impose a specific cycle. The EQAR Register Committee therefore underlined that this recommendation should be considered a suggestion.

Evidence

Due to the partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee’s renewal decision after the previous review, this review will also consider ESG 3.4.

Prior to the site visit, the panel consulted the madri+d website and studied the thematic analyses available. Since the last ENQA review there have been several publications as outlined below. Discussions with madri+d management and staff made clear there were several publications pending and expected to be published in 2024.

The thematic analysis reports published since the 2019 review include:

- The renewal of the accreditation of official degrees of the Madrid University System 2023.
- Report on good teaching practices in the COVID-19 period 2021.
- Taxonomic Map of Degrees of Public and Private Universities in the Community of Madrid 2021.
- Report on the State of Quality in Spanish Universities 2019 2020 (annual collaboration with ANECA and other Spanish QA agencies).

The following thematic analyses were expected to be published in 2024:

- An analysis of the Docencia procedure, in collaboration with ANECA and the other Spanish agencies.

- An analysis of the Verification and Modification procedure, by collecting and collating evaluation process data from recent years in order to improve the process of verification and modification of university degrees.
- A study of the Official Combined Study Programmes in the universities of Madrid. These programmes consist of two different Bachelor or Master Degrees which share a common core of subjects and are studied simultaneously, with an adjusted combined academic schedule that extend the duration of the studies for 1 or 2 more years.

As outlined in the SAR and confirmed during the interviews, the agency supports thematic analyses with a specific budget allocated to appoint external experts with an expertise on the subject to be analysed. In the SAR madri+d distinguishes three approaches to thematic analysis:

- Thematic analyses designed and conducted internally by madri+d staff;
- Thematic analyses in which madri+d participates as a collaborating member of institutional networks;
- Thematic analyses subcontracted by madri+d to external parties.

The agency has established a department within the organisation focussing on thematic analysis with two dedicated (part-time) staff members and which operates solely in the realm of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Area. An example of an internally designed and conducted analysis is the teaching practice in times of COVID-19, mentioned above. The panel learned of an example of the second category where madri+d participates in the work of the *Informe sobre el estado de la evaluación externa de la calidad en las universidades españolas – ICU* (Report on the state of the art of external quality assurance in the Spanish universities) on a yearly basis. This public report is coordinated by ANECA, based on a legal requirement, in collaboration with the 10 regional agencies. Lastly, in 2024 two external experts were contracted for additional work on thematic analyses on behalf of madri+d. One such study is a mapping exercise of degrees offered in the Madrid Higher Education System. The panel was informed that the work carried out by the external experts is monitored closely by the agency.

The SAR and the interviews during the site visit made clear that madri+d conducts studies they consider useful for their stakeholders, based on feedback from meta-evaluations, Advisory Board meetings, contact with university or business school quality assurance departments, analysis of regulatory changes, and in-house knowledge of the results and trends of evaluation processes. In addition, annual surveys disseminated among stakeholders include an open question concerning possible topics for thematic analysis. However, discussions during the diverse sessions with stakeholders led the panel to conclude that very few industry or HE representatives or students were aware that madri+d sought their input on possible research topics. The panel learned from the SAR that the Advisory Committee of madri+d, as part of its focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement, has a decision making role in which topics ultimately result in thematic analyses.

madri+d has initiated the development of a tool for the management and qualitative analysis of evaluation reports produced between monitoring and accreditation renewal, making use of Artificial Intelligence techniques, that could potentially facilitate the production of thematic analysis reports in the future. The agency hopes such a tool could efficiently extract data, for instance relating to Strong Points, Modifications, Recommendations or Observations. Output could be filtered according to different data fields and therefore provide information to produce focused thematic analysis reports. The interviews with madri+d staff showed that this project is still in a relatively exploratory phase.

Analysis

By means of studying the SAR, consulting the publications on the “Thematic Analysis” page on the website and conducting interviews during the site visit, the panel was able to verify madri+d’s

commitment to complying with this standard. By aligning staff and financial resources with partly dedicated positions for thematic analysis, both internally and externally, madri+d has made great strides since the last review, and ensures the potential for a systematic approach for data collection and reports produced.

The panel verifies the efforts made by the agency to select appropriate research topics, to conduct relevant and rigorous thematic analysis and to reflect on how to further develop this activity. In recent years madri+d has published a number of thematic analysis reports on its website. Some of the reports include analyses of huge bodies of data, for instance from thousands of accreditation reports or from a very large number of interviews. As the thematic analysis reports in the view of the panel are clearly written, well structured, and use trustworthy data as a basis for the analysis, these thematic analyses can not only contribute to the enhancement of quality assurance, but also identify areas for improvement in madri+d's activities. The thematic analyses so far conducted stem from a clearly identified need and make use of reliable data.

The panel appreciates the effort made thus far since the previous review but also observed during the interviews with stakeholders such as HE representatives or industry representatives, that few people were aware that madri+d aim to consult with and involve them in selecting appropriate topics for further research. This would suggest that the formal mechanisms of including the question in annual surveys to external experts and commission members, or during contact with stakeholders and boards are not sufficiently effective in eliciting input. However, the panel was reassured that a large number of stakeholders included in madri+d's governing bodies are consulted, when decisions are made about initiating new thematic analyses.

For its resolution to develop a tool making use of Artificial Intelligence techniques for the management and qualitative analysis of the reports evaluation reports, the panel is appreciative of madri+d's earnest commitment to produce focused thematic analysis reports. Having observed that this project is very much in the early stages, the panel suggests the agency seek collaboration with other agencies in areas where madri+d is working within the same regulatory framework. The panel has discovered multiple evidences of successful collaboration with other Spanish agencies in the course of this review and sees benefits in joint ventures in exploring the use of AI or other tools for collating data in evaluation reports.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

1. The panel suggests collaboration with other agencies nationally in areas where madri+d is working within the same regulatory framework and who are also currently exploring the use of AI for collating data in evaluation reports.
2. The panel encourages madri+d to in a more systematic way use its regular meetings with the stakeholders, including students, as an opportunity to seek their inputs in planning its future thematic analyses and identifying their topics.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

2019 review: partially compliant

In 2019 the agency was found to be fully compliant by the panel, however the EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG states that a registered agency should demonstrate how it ensures ESG compliance of the parts of the work performed by another agency where it makes a decision based on that agency's report. As at the time of the previous review madri+d took into account the results of international accreditations, the EQAR Register Committee had requested that the self-evaluation report and external review report address how the agency ensures ESG compliance when that agency is not registered on EQAR.

The findings in the previous report, combined with the examples of madri+d using non-EQAR registered agency reports, did not demonstrate sufficiently how ESG compliance is assured for reports by other, non-registered agencies. The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that madri+d only partially complied with standard 3.6.

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is supposed to consider all external quality assurance activities of madri+d when assessing ESG 3.6.

The Agency's internal quality assurance system is certified under ISO 9001: 2015 by European Quality Assurance, EQA, a certification body accredited by the Entidad Nacional de Acreditación, ENAC. The scope of the certification that includes each of the agency activities, and others performed by other areas of madri+d related to technology transfer and entrepreneurship is:

- Activities for the design and application of systems for the evaluation, certification and accreditation of institutions, programmes, and individuals in the field of Quality in Higher Education.
- Development of training actions in science, innovation, technology, entrepreneurship, and education.
- Certification of entrepreneurship mentors.

According to the SAR, the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) of madri+d follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to guarantee the quality of the services provided and their continuous improvement.

Concerning the first aspect of the cycle, "Plan", and according to the SAR, the madri+d Annual Management Review contains information pertaining to the agency performance of the previous periods. Diverse sources of information are included, such as internal and external audits, satisfaction surveys (disseminated after training or events), meta evaluations (surveys after QA cycles), and results from current procedures and projects. In order to corroborate the information in the SAR, the panel requested the agency provide the action plan and schedule following up on madri+d's meta-evaluation of the survey data for 2023. This was duly provided, as well as similar documentation from earlier years.

During a meeting with representatives of reviewed HEIs and business schools the panel was particularly interested to hear how the "Check" was carried out. In the following meeting, with quality assurance officers from the HEIs, the panel again enquired about the "Check" phase of the PDCA cycle. The panel heard how a number of feedback mechanisms have been implemented by madri+d to collect information oriented to the improvement of its activities in general and with a particular emphasis on their external quality assurance processes. Multiple mentions were made of satisfaction surveys for training and other such activities, meta-evaluation by means of surveys of QA processes upon completion of each cycle, and (re)evaluation of the external experts (reviewers). The (re)evaluation was especially well-structured and systematic according to those stakeholders involved. Hence, each

of the activities below and as mentioned in the SAR was corroborated in the discussions with the stakeholders and agency staff:

- Conduct internal and quality audits to ensure ISO 9001 compliance.
- Oversee procedures and projects, providing data on operational effectiveness.
- Administer satisfaction surveys for madri+d workshops, training, and events.
- Perform meta-evaluations of quality assurance processes, collecting feedback from stakeholders.
- Assess reviewers on deadline adherence, evaluation criteria application, and professional conduct, as evaluated by panel leaders, commission heads, and madri+d staff.

During the site visit, not reviewers alone, but also representatives of higher education institutions, and programme coordinators imparted a positive impression of madri+d's efforts to ensure proper working and enhancement of their own systems and procedures. HEI and business school representatives involved in the three activities highlighted in the targeted review, SISCAL, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, reported that they are systemically involved in revisions of the procedures, and feel able to give feedback on something that might not be working optimally. The panel heard that these representatives see adjustments directly, and gave examples pertaining to each procedure. The HEI representatives interviewed by the panel highlighted the accessibility of madri+d staff, noting that they can reach out with inquiries and consistently receive prompt and professional assistance. Several interviewees commended the agency for fostering a professional culture that encourages open and constructive dialogue. An additional example from discussions with HE representatives involved a significant recent change to the follow-up procedure concerning SISCAL. Upon receiving feedback from HEIs indicating that the follow-up process imposed a disproportionate workload and lacked functionality, madri+d swiftly revised the methodology. This change transitioned the follow-up from an annual to a mid-term procedure, developed in consultation with relevant partners. A further example concerns the assessment criteria for CUALIFICAM - after the pilot, and in response to feedback from stakeholders, madri+d adjusted the requirements to reach the 70 point threshold, but refined the procedure so that each assessment criterion had a minimum pass level. The panel noted this as evidence that processing feedback does not result in more lenient processes.

During the preparation for the site visit, an important issue was identified regarding the potential underrepresentation of women in expert panels and evaluation bodies, including committees and commissions. While the panel recognizes the high calibre of individual members, a gender disparity was noted. Upon request, the agency provided a gender breakdown of all members in expert panels and commissions. The findings revealed that women served as chair of the panels only 25% to 33% of the time, despite equal overall representation of women and men within the panels. The panel noted the mention of the Gender Balance Plan, initiated by madri+d in 2022, aimed at preventing and addressing discrimination within the agency.

Similarly, the panel made note of the 2023 Ethics Channel, a page on the madri+d website providing a means to anonymously report any action or omission in violation of (European) law, health and safety laws, administrative regulations or violation of internal madri+d regulations. This Ethics Channel stems indirectly from the madri+d Code of Ethics, to which all staff and reviewers must adhere. Posted on the agency website, the Code of Ethics outlines the standards and principles of conduct expected from the Foundation's staff and partners.

Another key document for the review panel was the madri+d Quality Policy, which outlines the organization's mission and vision, as well as its values and commitments to quality and public service. It also defines the standards by which the institution's activities must be conducted. The Quality Policy is publicly available for reference and in line with the PDCA cycle above, the agency regularly reviews it to ensure its continued relevance.

In the last external review a suggestion was made by the panel: *the panel suggests that the agency systematises feedback through its evaluation application so that it becomes routinized*. The current panel was able to observe that the suggestion made in the previous ENQA review report has been followed up by the agency. Specifically, the IT application SICAM used by madri+d in its programme evaluation procedures has been expanded to incorporate the use of feedback tools on the performance of the reviewers.

In the last EQAR decision, madri+d was found partially compliant with standard 3.6 due to its use of accreditation decisions from agencies not registered in EQAR as an input to its own accreditation processes. In a subsequent revision of the guide of the accreditation renewal procedure, madri+d has committed to only accepting international quality accreditations issued by agencies registered in EQAR. To confirm this statement from the SAR and information in the guide prior to the site visit, the panel requested additional information about the agencies from which madri+d has used accreditation decisions in its own accreditation processes previously. The panel also raised this issue in diverse interviews, and were informed that it was no longer the case that any decisions stemming from non-EQAR registered agencies were being taken into account by madri+d. Upon request, a detailed list of the agencies from which madri+d has used documentation and/or accreditation decisions in madri+d's own EQA-procedures in 2023 was provided. According to the documentation, the agency will no longer consider accreditation decisions from agencies not registered with the European Quality Assurance Register as part of its accreditation processes.

Analysis

The panel was able to confirm that the IQAS of madri+d, which was already in place at the time of the 2019 ENQA review and assessed as fully compliant by the 2019-panel, is still operating within the same overall framework, although this of course has been updated in the meantime. The panel found ample indication that the agency is open to suggestions and acts upon the feedback collected for its continuous improvement, and this is appreciated by stakeholders. The agency's internal QA policy of a comprehensive and systematic PDCA cycle demonstrates a commitment to monitoring, improving and enhancing the quality of the services provided. Feedback mechanisms are designed so that the agency can collect meaningful feedback for further improvement and enhancement of its processes. In the context of feedback collection, the panel observed that not only do the formal arrangements provide input for endorsement of good practice or suggestions for improvement, but that stakeholders feel the relationship with the agency is of such an open and constructive manner that they can always approach madri+d with queries and receive a direct response. The panel concludes that the systemic meta-evaluations for collecting feedback are complemented by input from informal feedback.

The interviews during the site visit therefore confirmed that madri+d has a well-thought out and well-structured approach to meeting its ambitions of constant improvement and enhancement of internal quality assurance. This proof of integrity and professionalism was evidenced by both the open manner in which the staff of the agency answered questions and in the way stakeholders described their relationship with the agency, and their involvement in the PDCA cycle of madri+d's IQAS.

The panel notes that the proportion of males to females in positions of leadership in commissions and expert panels is lagging in terms of balance, which if continued can imply a risk of discrimination. Homogeneity or overrepresentation of either men or women is also potentially problematic because similar voices can result in crowding out other expertise and alternative arguments. Diversity, not just in terms of gender, extends perspectives brought into any discussion, creating spaces for engagement and innovation among different viewpoints and experiences. The panel believes that promoting further engagement of female representatives within its expert panels, specifically in the role of president of expert panels, can assist in avoiding unconscious bias and be more appreciative to the women holding

leadership positions in academia and industry. While the panel appreciates that madri+d's first priority is the qualifications of an expert in terms of experience and expertise, they would point out that there is no reason the academic and industry population of the Madrid area and further afield would not include sufficient numbers of well-qualified women to chair a larger share of the commissions and panels.

The panel welcomes the developments since the last review in terms of the use of accreditation decisions from other agencies and post-evaluation surveys of HEIs, as recommended, and, particularly, of HEI representatives and other stakeholders about their satisfaction with the conduct of the agency's evaluation processes. Evidence from diverse sources made clear that the agency is no longer using accreditation decisions from agencies not registered in EQAR as input to its own accreditation processes. Therefore, the panel can conclude that the issues related to this former practice are no longer relevant.

Panel commendations

- I. madri+d has in place effective mechanisms for collecting and acting upon stakeholder feedback in a continuous effort to improve and enhance its performance.

Panel suggestion for further improvement

- I. The panel suggests that the agency gives consideration to promoting further engagement of female representatives within its expert panels and commissions, specifically in the role of president of expert panels.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

2019 review: fully compliant

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is supposed to consider all external quality assurance activities of madri+d when assessing ESG 2.1.

The madri+d 2019 SAR sets out ESG part I criteria and activities that were already carried out in 2019, namely: Ex-ante Verification and Modification of official programmes, Monitoring of official programmes, Accreditation Renewal of official programmes, Master programmes in the arts, SISCAL madri+d, Institutional Accreditation, Assessment of the programmes' development plan and DOCENTIA. Since then, these activities have been maintained with no major changes.

SISCAL madri+d has been revised, broadening its scope since the previous review. The evaluation criteria, and the manner in which they address ESG part I fulfilment by university centres, are not dissimilar to those in the original 2018 procedure. Specific changes cover clarification of the criteria, such as in centres offering doctoral programmes, as well as for centres offering non-official degrees.

Further, a new specific criterion for higher education institutions offering doctoral programmes has been added, related to R&D and technology transfer, as this is required by national regulations.

CUALIFICAM procedure is a new activity specifically designed for Professional Master Programmes offered by business schools. The evaluation criteria consist of four dimensions which are broken down into a number of analysis units. The table below summarises how these analysis units comprise the evaluation of the ESG part I criteria.

Sello SOFIA is a new procedure based on similar evaluation programmes at madri+d, such as the pre-existing SISCAL. The evaluation criteria consist of 10 standards. The correspondence with the ESG part I criteria is summarised below, too. As this is a programme that evaluates a higher education institution in its entirety, the evaluation of aspects related to the quality policy, the strategy and the overall performance of the institution have been reinforced.

The mapping covering the agency's revised or new external QA institutional level and programme level procedures is presented below. This table is adapted from Table 13 of madri+d's self-assessment report.

<i>Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance</i>	Programme level CUALIFICAM	Institutional level SISCAL Madrid	Institutional level Sello SOFIA
I.1 Policy for Quality Assurance	Application 1.4.3 2.2.8	1 8	1 2 6 7 8
I.2 Design and approval of programmes	1.1 1.2 1.3	2	5
I.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.5	3	5
I.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	2.2	3	5
I.5 Teaching staff	3.1 3.2 3.3	4	5
I.6 Learning resources and student support	2.1.2 3.4.3 3.4.4	5	4
I.7 Information management	4	6	10
I.8 Public information	1.4 2.1.1	7	9

I.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	2.2.8	3 9	11
I.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	1*	1*	2*

Table I Correspondence between ESG Part I criteria and madri+d' evaluation criteria for new or updated activities

1* CUALIFICAM and SISCAL review cycle is of 6 years. 2* Sello SOFIA review cycle is of 5 years

Analysis

Following a comprehensive analysis of the evidence provided within the SAR, additional documentation provided to the panel upon request, report templates and reports (including as yet unpublished), as well as interviews conducted during the site visit, the panel is confident that madri+d processes satisfactorily address Part I of the ESG. Regarding the external quality assurance activities, which have not undergone any major changes since the last ENQA review, the panel can confirm the assessment made by the 2019 panel in terms of the correspondence with ESG part I.

The agency was asked to provide a sample of templates and completed reports for each of the three procedures with a special focus in this review (SISCAL, CUALIFICAM Sello SOFIA), which, upon scrutiny, verified that the standards of ESG part I are reflected in the procedures of madri+d. Analysis of those expert panel reports provided by madri+d at an institutional level or programme level revealed that the reviewers have conducted their analyses comprehensively in terms of applicable criteria and standards. This would indicate that not only are the reviewers sufficiently trained and well briefed, but also that the information and procedures provided by the agency enable a fair and professional evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes of the reviewed institutions. The information concerning the adapted activity (SISCAL) or new activities (CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA) provided by the agency was supported by the interviewees both from within the agency and representing stakeholders.

The panel deduces that the criteria reviewed are aligned with ESG standards. The methodologies employed enable expert panels to thoroughly examine all relevant aspects of a university centre (SISCAL) or professional master (CUALIFICAM), or an institution (Sello SOFIA), including admission processes, program objectives, learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, and graduate employability, among other factors relevant for ESG part I. Oral testimonies obtained during interviews corroborated the panel's initial impressions from preparatory materials, indicating that the evaluation procedures involve comprehensive exploration and analysis, rather than mere fact-checking. The guidelines also facilitate expert panels in gathering pertinent and credible evidence to substantiate compliance with the established criteria.

On the basis of the documentation provided (upon request) and discussions held during the site visit, the panel concludes that the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes within HEIs is assessed by madri+d, and that assessment criteria of all procedures effectively translate the standards of ESG Part I (Table I).

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2019 review: fully compliant

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is to primarily focus on the revised SISCAL procedure and the new external quality assurance activities of madri+d, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, when assessing ESG 2.2.

As stated in the SAR, madri+d policy revision or development of external QA methodologies always involves stakeholders from both education and industry. To verify this, the panel spoke with a number of HEI representatives who were part of the stakeholder consultations for the revised SISCAL and new CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA procedures. They all confirmed that their input was taken into account, specifically regarding the finetuning of the standards. The panel questioned whether such an iterative consultation culture of regular stakeholder consultations might be too demanding but was reassured by diverse interviewees that this process was greatly valued by stakeholders and they are always willing to contribute. HE representatives specifically mentioned their appreciation of the agency's efforts to simplify the accreditation procedures while still maintaining a strong QA ethic. They felt that madri+d was aware of both the real and perceived administrative burden of audits for HE institutions.

The panel learned from the SAR that madri+d has established contact and signed a collaboration agreement with Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP), the student association representing all student unions in Spain, to enhance collaboration in all tasks related to quality assurance in higher education. Discussions during the course of the site visit with students and a representative of CREUP verified that the agency has indeed established a sustainable and productive dialogue between themselves and CREUP. The objectives are two-fold – to ensure regular student participation in evaluations and to obtain input for developing and improving procedures. The CREUP representative further explained that not all students involved in madri+d activities come directly from CREUP but that the agency does regularly request student members to be nominated by CREUP. While CREUP acknowledges that finances generally present a challenge, they do encourage the agency to make more use of the European Student Union (ESU) pool of student reviewers despite the higher costs.

The panel noted that institutions and other stakeholders were not significantly impacted by the transition of madri+d evaluation activities to an online format due to COVID-19 measures.

SISCAL

Recent royal decrees have prompted an expansion of madri+d's SISCAL activities to encompass QA for university centres offering non-official programs, such as micro-credentials and lifelong learning, as well as doctoral programs. Given that the external evaluation of these university centres' internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) for non-official and doctoral programs is a new undertaking that diverges from SISCAL's previous focus, madri+d has adapted various aspects of the SISCAL framework to address these differences. In developing this system, madri+d has considered the complexities inherent in the QA arrangements of both public and private universities. Interviews with madri+d staff

and higher education (HE) representatives revealed that private universities often operate from a more commercial perspective and are accustomed to adhering to standards such as ISO. Conversely, public universities face challenges in centralising QA initiatives due to a historical emphasis on autonomy.

As a result, madri+d has made significant efforts since 2021 to revise the SISCAL model to better accommodate these diverse programs. Discussions during the site visit clarified key changes made to the SISCAL framework for centres offering doctoral and non-official programs, as well as how stakeholder feedback was integrated into the process. For example, doctoral schools are now not evaluated solely from an academic perspective, but the criteria require the experts to check for evidence that there is knowledge transfer from academia to the public sector and to the private or more commercial sector. In the case of the new aspects of SISCAL, the documentation shows that the agency has made an effort to make the criteria fit for purpose, and make clear what areas should be evaluated.

During interviews, participants noted the considerable workload of university centres undergoing the SISCAL process. They explained how this strains resources and why some universities, especially public ones, hesitate, despite the prospect of avoiding external evaluations post-certification. HE representatives agreed that the SISCAL methodology should stay rigorous, as it serves its purpose, but also pointed to cultural and historical factors as reasons for reluctance to invest in certification. Representatives from higher education institutions acknowledged that while the SISCAL evaluation is a substantial undertaking, it is also beneficial and facilitates quality development.

Both students and QA professionals in higher education institutions have confirmed their awareness and involvement following significant legislative changes. QA officers from HEIs are systematically consulted during both the revision phase and the final consultation process whenever updates are made to the guide outlining the SISCAL procedure. The panel also discussed the follow-up procedures and their implications for institutional workload, while acknowledging that the agency has adequately addressed the concerns raised by higher education institutions by changing the annual follow-up to a mid-term procedure as described under ESG 3.6. Representatives of the institutions whom the panel met during the site visit felt this to be a welcome change in terms of reduced administrative burden.

CUALIFICAM

The CUALIFICAM certification of Professional Master Programmes was developed in collaboration with the association of Spanish Business Schools (AEEN) in 2021. This is a voluntary QA programme, open to all business schools with a headquarters located in Spain that hitherto have not had access to any regulatory activities or other such certification regarding the quality of the education provided. As described in the SAR, for the development of the methodology, a working group, including QA experts, was established with representatives of both madri+d and AEEN. An evaluation model proposed by the working group was approved by madri+d in 2022 and subsequently revised in 2023 on the basis of the outcomes of meta-evaluation surveys after the first pilot round. Talks with representatives of the regional ministry and business schools gave the panel a better understanding of why business programmes would have a separate evaluation within the Spanish HE landscape and the impact and further development since the first evaluations in 2022. Representatives from the business schools emphasized the need for external regulation in the sector, highlighting the importance of clearly identifying which institutions are reputable and provide high-quality education for prospective students.

While business schools and industry were actively involved in the updating of CUALIFICAM, the panel heard from students and madri+d staff that students were not directly involved in the initial development consultation procedure. Those involved in the development and present during the site visit pointed out to the review panel that they missed having students at that early stage but were

pleased to see that students did appear to be part of the improvement and enhancement process after the pilot.

Sello SOFIA

This institutional evaluation, born of the drive within madri+d to also collaborate with the Ibero-American Higher Education Area, meets the desire of some universities in that region for accreditation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by an EQAR listed agency. The Sello SOFIA procedure is only available for those institutions that have been accredited by their home country agencies. This new QA procedure was designed in 2022 with the involvement of an internationally oriented expert panel including a student, and a first pilot evaluation of a Colombian university was carried out in 2023. The guide has since been revised in consultation with and to the satisfaction of stakeholders. The main changes introduced since the 2019 review are clarifications or specifications of the general criteria, and reducing the criteria from eleven to ten by avoiding repetitive criteria. Interviews with HE representatives and external experts, including a student member, made clear that the Sello SOFIA methodology and guide are clear and support HE institutions and experts in carrying out their respective tasks.

Analysis

The agency uses a wide-ranging blend of different procedures to conduct both programme (CUALIFICAM) and institutional (SISCAL and Sello SOFIA) audits and accreditations, which the panel discussed with the agency management and staff, as well as representatives of higher education institutions both in the Madrid region and Ibero-America, Madrid regional ministry and local industry. The methodologies for the assessment of the institutions and university centres, including those offering doctoral programmes and (non-official) programmes within the remit of madri+d are set out clearly and comprehensively in the guides published by the agency. The guides detail the procedures and criteria applicable to each assessment system, which enables the institutions to work with the guidelines and facilitates the external experts in their evaluation work.

All those higher education, regional government and industry representatives interviewed confirmed the suitability of the evaluation methodologies used, and were generally complementary of the consultation procedures aimed at improving and enhancing the respective QA systems. This confirmed to the panel that madri+d are fully committed to designing procedures that meet national and regional regulations, are fit for purpose and in line with expectations from both higher education and industry.

The considerable workload for university centres undergoing a SISCAL procedure was discussed during the interviews, as the panel was curious to find out both whether this was disproportionately demanding of resources or an explanation behind the fact that some - especially public - university centres are reluctant to initiate the procedure, even though SISCAL certification means that the centres need no longer undergo external evaluation of their provision of programmes. HEI representatives expressed a clear and common view that the methodology very much should be as stringent as it currently is and serves its purpose. They agreed that the reluctance to invest time and resources in SISCAL certification might also be a question of cultural and historical circumstances at some institutions.

The panel was impressed by the strong ethical commitment and dedication to quality assurance demonstrated by madri+d, as reflected in the positive feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders. It is noteworthy that all stakeholders confirmed their structural involvement in initiatives aimed at improving and enhancing evaluation methodologies and associated guidelines. They expressed appreciation for madri+d's efforts to streamline processes in recognition of the administrative challenges that accreditation entails. Considering the evidence presented, the panel does however

conclude that madri+d could make an effort to prioritize student involvement in all future system development processes.

madri+d practices were adapted to online use during the COVID-19 crisis. The panel gained a positive impression of how madri+d staff, institutions and external experts experienced the transition to online, the quality of communication about the adapted procedures and how the evaluations were able to continue despite the limitations of the COVID-19 crisis.

Summarised, the panel reiterates the conclusions of the 2019 report that each activity is supported by clear methodologies, policies, guidelines and templates; approaches are developed in continuous consultation with stakeholders; and this has resulted in a range of methodologies that are fit for purpose.

Panel commendations

1. The panel endorses the agency's culture of regularly updating its methodology and responding in an agile manner to legislative changes in quality assurance in their evaluation methodologies.
2. madri+d is commended for the involvement of stakeholder representatives of higher education institutions, regional authorities and industry in further developing assessment procedures.
3. The panel commends the agency in their efforts to simplify evaluation processes and which are positively welcomed by the HEIs.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

1. The panel suggests that particular attention be paid to the systemic involvement of students at all times when developing and updating methodologies.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

2019 review: fully compliant

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is to primarily focus on the new external quality assurance activities of madri+d (CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA) when assessing ESG 2.3.

CUALIFICAM

Having studied both the SAR and the agency website, the panel confirms the agency publishes all relevant information about this quality assurance process on its website, such as the guide describing the criteria, required evidence and steps in detail. Next to the comprehensive guide there are

supporting documents summarising the main criteria and links to previously published accreditation reports that also serve as examples. As described in the SAR, the CUALIFICAM procedure aligns closely with the ESG, such as a requirement for a self-assessment report and supporting documentation followed by a one-day site visit by an expert panel including a student, and culminating in a report reflecting the evaluation of the evidence provided. Following the issuance of the final report, a follow-up on the recommendations is conducted in alignment with the proposed improvement plan. This follow-up is carried out within three years for 'Favourable' reports and within one year for 'In Revision' reports. The CUALIFICAM review procedure uses the EVALUE application, which supports business schools in internal quality assurance by allowing them to upload documentation, evidence, and records. It also facilitates external reviews by providing expert reviewers with structured and easy access to information.

From representatives of business schools the panel learned that the evaluation guide and template are seen as appropriate and clear, that madri+d always responds rapidly to any requests for clarification and that the agency is consistent in the implementation of this evaluation methodology. The evaluation process and documents are similarly clear and understandable to those external experts, including student reviewers, the panel spoke with during the site visit.

The review panel was able to examine published reports and also had access to the report template. The reports indicated that the expert panels conducted an evaluation of the programme which involved a detailed examination of the self-assessment report and supporting documents and a site visit with interviews with staff, students and relevant stakeholders. The reports showed consistency in terminology and structure. After the final report is issued a follow-up of the recommendations is performed, adjusted to the extent of the improvement plan proposed. This is performed within three years for favourable reports, and within one year for reports requiring revision.

Sello SOFIA

Relevant information pertaining to this QA activity was found on the agency website, such as the requirements to be able to undergo the certification, the guide describing criteria, required evidence and steps in detail. There is also information regarding the expert panel composition and the International Accreditation Committee that is responsible for the accreditation of institutions not part of the Spanish university system. Visitors to the website can also reference the “Registry of Accredited Universities,” listing institutions abroad that have successfully applied for the Sello SOFIA certification. This procedure aligns with the ESG, including a self-assessment report and supporting documentation, which are analysed by the evaluation panel. This is followed by a site visit by an expert panel, the duration of the site visit depending on the size and scope of the university. For example, the first pilot process visit took one week. The panel’s preparatory work and site visit culminate in a report evaluating the evidence provided and monitoring follow-up actions.

In speaking with representatives of the first - and until that point only - Sello SOFIA certified HEI the panel learned that the evaluation guide and template are seen as appropriate and clear and that madri+d assisted readily when needed. The evaluation process and documents were comprehensible to the expert panel and student involved in that review and interviewed during the site visit.

The review panel was able to examine a published report and also had access to the report template. The report indicated that the expert panel conducted the Sello SOFIA evaluation of the institution by first studying the self-assessment report and supporting documents and subsequently partaking in a site visit with interviews with staff, students and other relevant parties. After finalisation of the report a follow-up of the recommendations is to be performed, adjusted to the extent of the improvement

plan proposed. According to the SAR and the Sello SOFIA guide this is performed within three years for favourable reports, and within one year for reports requiring revision.

Analysis

On the basis of the evidence presented, the panel acknowledges that the new external quality assurance processes, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, are now well-established. It confirms that all external QA activities are transparent and supported by clear, well-documented guidelines available on the madri+d website. The information provided regarding these two procedures specifies that business schools undergoing CUALIFICAM evaluation and Ibero-American higher education institutions seeking accreditation from an EQAR-registered agency must adhere to steps fully aligned with ESG requirements. These steps include self-assessment, an expert panel site visit, a review report with final assessment, and a robust follow-up procedure. Evidence gathered from the SAR, additional information requested from the agency, and interviews with various stakeholders assures the panel that these two evaluation processes are implemented consistently and transparently.

From the interviews, it was clear to the panel that all stakeholders understood the importance of following the four-stage model required in this standard. There was a common understanding of the minimum requirements of a self-assessment report and how best to design and carry out a fruitful site visit. The panel observed that experts, students and representatives of HEIs proved cognisant of the requirements of a clear and coherent report and understood the consequence of the follow-up procedures.

The panel corroborates that the agency publishes all accreditation reports, whether resulting in a favourable or unfavourable decision. Any outcomes requiring revision arising from an CUALIFICAM or Sello SOFIA process are managed through consistent follow-up procedures. The review panel acknowledges the agency's efforts to develop follow-up procedures tailored for each of its two new external QA activities and to apply them consistently.

The panel finds that procedures are implemented and executed consistently and transparently, fully aligned with the ESG. This alignment is supported by madri+d staff, HEI quality officers, and experts. The panel confirms that all process steps are clearly detailed in each guide, and that the agency demonstrates diligence in developing procedures that comply with both national and regional legislative requirements in Spain and the Madrid area. It is evident to the panel that the agency maintains transparent procedures that are accurately understood by stakeholders.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

2019 review: fully compliant

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is to primarily focus on the new external quality assurance activities of madri+d (CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA) when assessing ESG 2.4.

All of madri+d's evaluation procedures are conducted with the involvement of external experts including mostly national academic experts from preferably outside the Madrid region, industry representatives and students. The panel learned from the SAR that prioritizing experts from outside the Madrid Higher Education System is designed to prevent conflicts of interest and offer an objective, external perspective on the system. The agency maintains a pool of experts that have been appointed by the director of the agency. Regarding student involvement, madri+d has established a formal agreement with CREUP, enabling regular communication and collaboration in events, and which also includes the identification and training of specialised students.

During discussions, both madri+d staff and external experts elaborated on the tailored training and briefing pathways developed for each specific evaluation procedure and expert profile. In response to the panel's request, the agency provided comprehensive documentation pertaining to the training processes. Madri+d has designed training modules that cater to different evaluation procedures and expert profiles. For instance, a training day includes dedicated sessions for novice experts, alongside plenary sessions open to all participants. The panel noted that satisfaction surveys and meta-evaluations also play a significant role in refining the training programs, as they help identify areas for improvement, for instance when issues arise in draft reports.

CUALIFICAM

According to the SAR, CUALIFICAM evaluation bodies are two-fold: the expert panels and the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission. Both the panels and the commission are peopled by experts external to madri+d and act as independent and impartial evaluators. Their roles, however, are very different, as the expert panels are responsible for the review of a specific programme, including going on a site visit, whereas the Certification Commission is the more permanent decision-making body regarding the CUALIFICAM reviews and decides on the final formal outcome for each review.

CUALIFICAM reviews for the certification of business programmes typically involve four experts as members of the expert panel. Expert panels include a president, a secretary (usually not from madri+d), and a panel member from either academia or industry, and a student representative. Experts in a specific panel have been selected from the pool in madri+d's database of reviewers, and with regard to the student member, at times in cooperation with CREUP. Reviewers are selected on the basis of their proven academic and professional experience. In contrast to madri+d's other evaluation activities, the experts in CUALIFICAM more often have a professionally oriented profile as opposed to an academic research oriented profile. According to the SAR, this is because professional master programmes focus more on transferable skills required by the field and employability. To date, the members of CUALIFICAM's expert panels have been drawn from both academic and professional fields. This includes university professors, auditors from reputable certifying organizations, CEOs of companies, and professionals who have completed advanced business programs at business schools comparable to the ones being evaluated.

The CUALIFICAM Certification Commission consists of six members: a president, secretary, diverse experts in the field of higher education or industry, and a student. This Certification Commission is, as stated above, responsible for decision making regarding the formal outcomes of the review processes and for issuing of the final report for each programme undergoing the CUALIFICAM certification process.

As a formal affirmation, all experts involved in the review processes declare the absence of any potential conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the agency communicates the composition of the expert

group to the relevant higher education institution. The HEI retains the right to submit a justified objection to the proposed expert panel.

All experts, in both the expert panels and the Certification Commission, take part in the (online) madri+d training for CUALIFICAM about the criteria and evaluation model. The panel was given access to the content of the training. Applicants are assessed for their independence and impartiality to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and also required to submit a signed statement of impartiality. The business school may refuse participation of an expert in a panel provided that they argue a justified case and follow protocol as set out in the guides. The number of experts in CUALIFICAM expert panels over the course of 2023 was 59, of which 41 came from the Madrid region, and the distribution by gender was 34 men to 25 women. Due to financial constraints, the agency is unable to increase the number of international experts participating in the reviews. The panel learned that in a number of ways, experts from the Madrid region were preferred as they were more familiar with the Madrid higher education system.

In 2022, a new IT application was implemented on the madri+d website to enhance the management of the expert pool and facilitate the orientation of prospective applicants. During the panel visit, additional recruitment methods were discussed, including recommendations from other quality assurance agencies and direct personal contacts.

Sello SOFIA

Similarly, the Sello SOFIA evaluation bodies are two-fold as stated in the SAR: the expert panels and the International Accreditation Committee. Both these bodies are composed of experts external to madri+d and act as independent and impartial evaluators. It is also the case regarding the Sello SOFIA evaluations that the roles of these bodies are very different. Again, the diverse expert panels are individually responsible for the review of a specific institution, including participating in a site visit, whereas the International Accreditation Committee is the more permanent decision-making body regarding the Sello SOFIA evaluations and decides on the final formal outcome of each evaluation.

Reviewers are selected based on their established academic credentials, and where relevant their professional expertise. The expert panels comprise four or more members, including a chair, secretary, academic or industry professional, student from a similar programme as those offered by the HEI under review, and optionally an industry representative. At least one of the experts must be from the country in which the HEI under review is situated. An effort is made to include a member with extensive expertise of any of the academic areas of the HEI. To date only one university in Ibero-America has completed the Sello SOFIA evaluation. The expert panel consisted of eight experts, of whom four were from outside Spain, three from Madrid and one from elsewhere in Spain. The gender composition was equal numbers of men and women.

The International Accreditation Committee has a similar composition, though only with five members, including a student. As mentioned above, the International Accreditation Committee is responsible for decision making regarding the formal outcome of the review process and for issuing the final report for each institution undergoing the Sello SOFIA evaluation process.

All experts are selected in a similar fashion, and trained in the Sello SOFIA methodology and criteria. All experts involved in the review process confirm no conflicts of interest. The agency shares the expert panel composition with the relevant higher education institution, which may raise a justified objection. The experts the panel met spoke with pleasure of peer-to-peer learning during their work. The panel was given complete access to the comprehensive and well-structured (online) training materials. Those experts the review panel spoke with also told of how, after the training, they were asked to provide feedback on both the training and evaluation process. madri+d takes measures to

verify experts' independence and impartiality to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and also requires a signed statement of impartiality.

The students interviewed by the panel expressed a positive outlook regarding their involvement in the expert panels in both CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA. They noted that there were no perceived hierarchical dynamics, and the student member was entrusted with full responsibility during the site visit and the report drafting process.

Analysis

The guidelines for the standard recommend that peer experts provide input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers or professional practitioners. Based on the guidelines for selection of experts and the information gathered in interviews during the site visit, the panel concludes that for both CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA the composition of the expert panels is appropriate regarding size and qualification and that it also includes students as required by the standard. The panel found that the agency has made great efforts to ensure that high-quality academic and/or professional evaluators are used in the CUALIFICAM evaluations and in the thus far completed Sello SOFIA evaluation. The review panel would however suggest that teaching staff from the business schools either in the region or further afield be encouraged to participate in the CUALIFICAM reviews due to their unique perspective and familiarity with the culture of business schools and professional masters programmes.

During the site visit, the review panel noted a high representation of local Madrid experts on the panels. However, higher education institutions expressed a strong desire for a greater number of international experts. While familiarity with the Madrid higher education system and the ability to conduct reviews in Spanish were considered paramount, the panel acknowledged that the potential for increased expenses could be offset by the availability of Spanish-speaking experts throughout Europe. The panel also emphasised that, similar to the training provided for specific procedures like CUALIFICAM, experts could receive tailored training regarding the Madrid higher education system. Additionally, the panel commends the agency for its effective collection of feedback from experts regarding both the training and evaluation processes, which supports ongoing refinement and enhancement efforts.

The panel was impressed with the level of appreciation expressed by reviewers for the preparation offered by Madrid by means of (online) training. Experts felt well equipped with regard to the procedures and interpretation and implementation of the criteria. Discussions with experts substantiated that the training activities were appropriate and effective. The panel considers this conducive to a qualified and trustworthy operation of the evaluations. The professional deportment of experts was also mentioned in a positive manner by representatives of the business schools in CUALIFICAM and the Ibero-American HEI that took part in Sello SOFIA.

The panel finds it positive that the members of the decision-making bodies, the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission and the Sello SOFIA International Accreditation Committee, also take part in the expert training, although the tasks of these bodies differ from the tasks of the expert panels. In the view of the panel, the responsibilities of these decision-making bodies are similar to those of the central accreditation council in many European external quality assurance agencies.

Panel commendations

- I. The panel commends the agency for its programme of training and briefing experts for their role in programme and institutional evaluations.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

1. The panel suggests that the agency gives consideration to including more experts from outside the Madrid region and further afield, outside Spain, in expert panels, and ask ESU to forward their experts' pool of the Spanish speaking students outside the country.
2. The panel suggests also including lecturers from business schools for the CUALIFICAM expert panels.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2019 review: fully compliant

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is to focus on the revised SISCAL procedure and the new external quality assurance activities of madri+d, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, when assessing ESG 2.5.

As explained in the SAR, criteria for outcomes are specific for each type of evaluation and are set out in the supporting material such as the guides on the website to ensure all stakeholders are familiar with them.

Madri+d ensure consistency of application of evaluation criteria by means of:

- Training and briefing of experts specific to the evaluation activity undertaken. Each of the three procedures focussed on in this review has its own training course with a focus on the specific criteria. This training pertains to both expert panels and the committees/commissions below.
- Technical staff (technicians) at the agency who scrutinise the draft reports to ensure that each individual criterion is correctly applied and that reports are aligned with those previously published.
- Specialised evaluation and accreditation committees/commissions that safeguard consistent implementation of the criteria in the reports and who, if they require clarifications about the content of the report, can consult with the chair and/or the secretary of the expert panel.
- Meta evaluations to identify and counter any issues in the procedures and workings of the agency.

SISCAL

madri+d have adapted the SISCAL procedure to include the evaluation of university centres offering doctoral programmes and non-official learning trajectories such as micro-credentials. The panel heard in the interviews how the agency has collaborated closely with stakeholders both in the initial development of the criteria and in any subsequent revisions. All interested parties are invited to comment before finalisation of the criteria.

The panel heard how the agency considers training and briefing experts to be familiar with the criteria, how to interpret them and subsequently apply them, an essential part of their responsibilities.

A safeguard built into the SISCAL evaluation process is the role of the SISCAL Certification Committee. One of their key responsibilities is ensuring that the evaluation criteria are applied consistently and presented with clarity in the report. The evaluation report, as drafted by the expert panel, is forwarded to the SISCAL Certification Committee, who review the content of the evaluation report and may make adjustments to ensure consistency and uniformity in the assessment of criteria. If, to ensure maximum clarity and consistency, the Certification Committee requires clarifications about the content or criteria in the report, the Certification Committee can consult with the chair and/or the secretary of the expert panel. Only after the committee is confident the criteria and ensuing judgements are sufficiently substantiated can the report be forwarded to the HEI for a check on factual inaccuracies.

CUALIFICAM

The review process and outcome criteria for this initiative adopt a unique methodology distinct from other madri+d activities, integrating qualitative and quantitative analysis. Each criterion encompasses specific characteristics of excellence, assigned a weighting that reflects its significance to the overall performance of the program, with the total weight summing to 100. Ratings for each characteristic are based on a semi-quantitative scale, which includes "Complete Fulfilment," "Substantial Fulfilment," "Partial Fulfilment," and "Non-Fulfilment" (with no points awarded). A score of 55 points or lower indicates a negative assessment, while between 55 and 70 requires revision, and scores of 70 or higher are deemed positive. Discussions during the site visit clarified that expert panels are trained to gather and present comprehensive supporting evidence to substantiate each score assigned to any criterion. Each panel member contributes individually to the report, which is later consolidated and calibrated to ensure consistency with the criteria and alignment with previously published reports. An additional factor promoting consistency in the understanding and application of the criteria is the thorough training provided to experts. The panel reviewed training documentation and engaged with madri+d staff, observing that experts are trained not only to verify facts but also to analyse information.

A key measure to ensure accurate application of the criteria within the CUALIFICAM evaluation process is the role of the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission. One of its primary responsibilities is to ensure that evaluation criteria and scoring are applied consistently and presented clearly in the evaluation report. Once the expert panel drafts the report, it is submitted to the Certification Commission for review. The commission evaluates the report's content and may make necessary adjustments to uphold consistency and uniformity in the assessment of criteria. If additional clarification is needed regarding the report's content or criteria, the Certification Commission has the authority to consult with the chair or secretary of the expert panel. The report will only be forwarded to the business school for a factual accuracy check once the Certification Committee is confident that the criteria and associated judgments are adequately substantiated.

Sello SOFIA

The comprehensive guide describes the criteria, procedures, and provides useful examples of evidence for each criterion that the institution should provide, or the review panel may look into, in order to safeguard evidence-based judgments. During the site visit the panel verified the information in the SAR, that in evaluating HEIs in Ibero-America the education, research areas and impact at regional/national levels are major focus areas in the criteria. The uniformity of the application of the criteria is in part ensured by consistent training and briefing of the experts. Sello SOFIA too implements a four-point A-D scale for each standard: "Excellent fulfilment", "Fulfilment", "Fulfilment with conditions" or "Non-Fulfilment". The evaluation criteria are applied by the evaluation panels in an initial report. The

consistency of the analysis and the conclusions is guaranteed by the International Accreditation Committee responsible for issuing the final reports.

Although the president of the International Accreditation Committee ultimately takes responsibility for decisions, there is a multiphased procedure to ensure the objectivity and validity of the judgments made to reach a decision. It includes the provisional report being pre-screened by the madri+d technicians and then by the aforementioned International Accreditation Committee. As with all madri+d expert panel reports, the technicians pay special attention to consistency with criteria. They also explained that in future, should there be more published reports, they will also examine draft reports for consistency with other Sello SOFIA reports. Should the International Accreditation Committee require further clarification regarding the report's content or criteria, it may consult with the chair or secretary of the expert panel. The report will only be forwarded to the Ibero-American institution for a factual accuracy check once the Committee is confident that the criteria and resulting judgments are thoroughly substantiated. An ensuing "allegation phase" allows the institution to comment on factual errors in the provisional report, after which the final report is issued.

Analysis

The documentation made available by madri+d and the interviews held during the site visit roundly convinced the panel that the criteria of the adapted SISCAL procedure and new CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA procedures are applied consistently and ensure evidence-based decision-making. Each of the procedures is based on pre-defined and explicit criteria, and full documentation is easily accessible on madri+d's website. This includes information on the relevant frameworks and national or regional regulations and legislation. Explanatory documents and guides relating to the procedures and evaluation criteria, the composition and functions of the expert panels, the SISCAL Certification Committee, the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission and the International Accreditation Committee, as well as past evaluation reports were also available. The panel found that consistency in the implementation of the evaluation procedures and a consistent interpretation and application of the criteria are ensured by the thorough training of panel experts, the secretaries, and relevant decision making committees or commissions, which play a major role in ensuring a consistent application of criteria and judgement across panels and reports. The roles of the certification and accreditation committees and commissions as the independent decision making bodies for the reports and outcome of reviews are robust and reliable.

Summarised, the panel confirms the consistent application of the updated SISCAL madri+d Internal Quality Assurance Certification standards. The panel also observes that the practice by madri+d of producing accessible and comprehensive guides that aid in accurate application of the assessment criteria appears to have been successfully extended to the two new processes of CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA. The consistency of reporting for both new processes and the adjusted pre-existing SISCAL make clear to the panel that the criteria have not only been correctly understood and implemented by the experts but that both the secretaries writing the reports and the agency technicians responsible for consistent implementation of the criteria and reporting, and review committees/commissions carry out their responsibilities in a professional and reliable manner.

Panel commendations

- I. The panel commends madri+d on their concerted efforts to ensure criteria are applied in a consistent manner by means of training of experts, support by technicians or secretaries, and scrutiny by the committees/commissions.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2019 review: partially compliant

Based on the information in the 2019 review-report the EQAR Register Committee found that the assessment of institutions' programmes development plans is part of an authorisation process in which institutions are assessed against preset criteria, and thus should be considered a quality assurance process. Given that the assessment of institutions' programmes development plans were not being published, the Register Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of compliant, but concluded that madri+d only partially complied with the standard.

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is supposed to generally consider ESG 2.6 due to absence of publication of the reports resulting from the assessments of institutions' programmes development plans. The updated SISCAL activities and new external quality assurance activities of madri+d (CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA) are also included in ESG 2.6.

Madri+d systematically publishes reports related to ESG-relevant activities on its website, whether detailing a favourable or unfavourable outcome, ensuring public access. This applies not just to SISCAL, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, but also to other pre-existing procedures: institutional accreditation, *Verification and Modification*, *Monitoring and Accreditation Renewal of Official Programmes*, and the assessments of institutions' programmes development plans – the latter having been flagged by the EQAR Register Committee after the last review.

Both in the SAR and in the interviews with madri+d staff, the panel learned that consistent and valid reporting that is clearly communicated to all stakeholders is regarded as an essential aspect of their agency culture. As such, the agency staff and management expressed their determination to undertake efforts to ensure consistency not only in the structure and wording of reports, but also in the publication thereof. Decisions are mentioned on the relevant webpage, subsequently incorporated into the reports and are therefore not published separately.

The panel was able to confirm that evaluation reports, including those with unfavourable decisions, are published on the madri+d website, as well as on the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) portal and university websites. The panel has examined a sample of reports for the evaluation procedures within the scope of this review, either provided by madri+d or downloaded from the website and finds them clear and accessible. Reports are written primarily with the institutions and academic community in mind in terms of accountability. Regarding the general public and decision making by prospective students - the panel noted that the reports are well-structured, which enhances clarity and accessibility, allowing for easy identification of conclusions and recommendations.

Currently, reports are submitted by the expert panel that participated in the site visit to the madri+d technicians and relevant commissions or committees. These reports undergo a review process to ensure consistency in the implementation of criteria, terminology, and scoring systems. The technicians may make minor adjustments primarily related to terminology or consistency with the established criteria. The provisional report, as drafted by the responsible commission or committee

based on the evaluation/site visit report from the experts, is subsequently presented to the HEI or business school for verification of factual accuracy. Following this review, the responsible commission or committee finalises the report. During the site visit, the review panel discussed this procedure in various sessions and learned that the expert panel is notified once the report is finalised and published. Adjustments may be made to enhance consistency in terminology or to align with previously published reports, and reports may be condensed by omitting extraneous details for improved legibility and coherence. The technicians clarified that editorial harmonisation by technicians and committees/commissions does not typically alter the judgments made by the panel or affect any subsequent decisions, despite the committees'/commissions' authority to do so. In the case of ex-ante verification and modification procedures for official programs, which are desk-based and do not involve a visiting panel, committees may adjust the overall conclusion of the subcommittee responsible for the preliminary assessment.

The previous ENQA review panel suggested that “the final reports issued by committees be formally approved by review panels to further reinforce the transparency of the process” (ENQA report p37). According to the SAR, and substantiated in interviews with staff, madri+d have implemented a new step in the procedure during which all experts who have participated in a review are informed when the final report is issued by the commission. From the perspective of madri+d, this ensures that experts can be aware of any changes made and – in case of disagreement – are in a position to report it. All parties engaged during the site visit expressed support for the madri+d approach to publication, which is reportedly standard practice among most Spanish quality assurance agencies.

The panel has confirmed the publication of reports assessing institutions' program development plans. During the previous review, it was determined that these reports, part of a broader authorization process for new universities and university centres initiated by the General Directorate of Universities, should only be published by the relevant regional administration in accordance with regional legislation and transparency protocols. Following consultations with the General Directorate of Universities of the Madrid Region, madri+d has received authorization to publish these assessment reports and program development plans. A review of the website and various entries by the panel revealed that the reports are now readily available and easily accessible.

SISCAL

As of the time of the site visit, seven university centres were undergoing review in accordance with the new guidelines. All these centres offer official programs, with four providing at least one doctoral program. Reviews of university's IQAS for non-official training have not yet commenced. Once the ensuing reports are finalised, they will be published, including both IQAS design and implementation reports. The panel verified that all reports for the completed assessment procedures are publicly available.

CUALIFICAM

The first CUALIFICAM procedures to certify Professional Master Programmes at business schools took place in 2022. All submissions for certification by business schools and the ensuing judgements and reports can be found on the madri+d website. The CUALIFICAM pages on the madri+d site link through to a dedicated CUALIFICAM website with detailed information on the programmes. This website is supported by madri+d together with the co-creator of CUALIFICAM, AEEN. madri+d nevertheless retains full responsibility for the publication of the reports, which are always published for full transparency whether containing favourable and unfavourable judgements.

The panel verified that all reports for the completed assessment procedures are publicly available.

Sello SOFIA

This new evaluation procedure was first piloted in 2023 at a technological university in Colombia. To date, this is the only completed Sello SOFIA review though other universities are currently in the initial stages of the accreditation process. As such the panel could only examine one published report for this procedure but noted that the webpage with the “Registry of Accredited Universities” under Sello SOFIA contains all relevant information clearly displayed including a link to the report.

The panel confirmed the report for the first completed assessment procedure is publicly available.

Analysis

The panel confirms the conclusions of the previous review that madri+d has a consistent approach to publishing reports of its evaluation activities on their website so that they are accessible to stakeholders. The panel found that all reports, including the reports deriving from SISCAL, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA, contain analyses of strengths and weaknesses, have a clear structure and are easy to read and affirmed there is consistency between findings and conclusions.

The review panel found it easy to locate material on the website. madri+d consistently publishes all reports on a well-structured and easily navigable website. The panel considers the reports and the decisions therein clear, comprehensive, and accessible and deduces that in terms of accountability the reports and the manner in which they are published meet all expectations as informed by the ESG. The reports for the new processes meet the expectations of the panel in their completeness and clarity. Both the CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA reports offer a detailed exposition of these evaluation procedures, an explanation of the work of the expert panels and the detail of compliance with each standard.

Regarding the publication of finalised reports influenced by technicians or relevant commissions/committees, the panel acknowledges the rationale behind madri+d's procedures to ensure consistency with established criteria and previously published reports. However, the panel expresses concern that this approach diminishes transparency and obscures the extent to which the final report reflects the assessment of the commission/committee versus that of the expert panel. While recognizing the commissions' and committees' responsibility for validating final reports, the panel asserts that expert panels should retain the opportunity to take ownership of evaluation outcomes. Therefore, the panel recommends that the final version of the provisional report be submitted to the president of the expert panel for endorsement prior to finalisation and publication. This is particularly crucial in instances where the commission or committee might implement more comprehensive changes to the report originally drafted by the expert panel.

Concerning the publication of assessments of institutions' programmes development plans, the panel has been able to confirm that madri+d publishes all evaluation documentation, irrespective of outcome. Therefore the panel concludes that the agency has responded adequately to the objection raised by the EQAR Registration Committee in 2020 regarding ESG 2.6.

Panel commendations

- I. The review panel commends the agency on the comprehensive and detailed reporting of the activities and conclusions of its expert panels.

Panel recommendations

- I. The panel recommends that the final version of the provisional report be presented to the president of the expert panel for endorsement prior to finalisation and publication.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

2019 review: substantially compliant

- The panel recommends the agency to establish and publish a protocol for complaints that is different from appeals with clear instructions for the users.

Evidence

According to the Terms of Reference, the review panel is supposed to primarily focus on the new external quality assurance activities of madri+d (CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA) when assessing ESG 2.7.

During the previous review, the agency employed various channels for complaints, lacking a unified, publicly accessible procedure for formal submissions. As of 2023, the agency has implemented a standardised procedure within its IQAS, namely PM07 for Complaints, Suggestions, and Commendations Management. This procedure is prominently featured on the agency's website, alongside a digital contact form for complaints, suggestions, and commendations. Additionally, this complaints procedure is accessible to institutions undergoing review by CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA. According to the SAR, the average response time is seven days. All outlined procedures were verified during the site visit. HEI and business school quality assurance staff did, however, indicate a preference for directly contacting madri+d via telephone for immediate responses.

CUALIFICAM

Similar to other madri+d evaluation procedures, CUALIFICAM includes an appeals protocol that allows business schools to formally contest findings, request clarifications, or suggest improvements regarding finalised review reports issued by the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission. madri+d views this protocol as essential for ensuring the legal validity of decisions, as it upholds the legal certainty of the process and protects the interests of all stakeholders involved. According to the CUALIFICAM guide, once a report is finalised, institutions may submit a formal appeal to madri+d regarding the report's conclusions. Discussions with various external members of the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission provided the panel with valuable insights into this procedure. The panel expressed particular interest in the specific types of factual errors or disagreements raised by stakeholders.

At the time of the review, two appeals had been submitted for the 2022-2023 timeframe, subsequent to the issuance of the final report. These appeals are scrutinised by the Guarantees and Complaints Committee, an independent body composed of experts that do not participate in the review processes. At the time of the review the first appeal has been rejected and the second is still under investigation.

During interviews with quality assurance representatives from HEIs, the panel gathered insights into how business schools navigate the appeals procedure at the agency after the issuing of the final report. The panel noted that when discrepancies in final reports are identified by business schools, they know they can reach out to the head of the department at madri+d, who provides prompt clarification on any issues. It was observed that these alleged inconsistencies typically relate to terminology or minor

scoring adjustments, rather than concerns about the judgments made regarding criteria or overall decisions. Therefore formal appeals are seldom filed by the institutions under review.

Sello SOFIA

Upon finalisation of a report, in the event of a discrepancy or disagreement, an HEI can also submit an appeal to madri+d. Should such an appeal be submitted, madri+d policy decrees it is directed to the President of the Accreditation Commission and then to the secretary of the Guarantees and Complaints Committee for investigation. During the site visit, online interviews with various stakeholders, including external members of the International Accreditation Committee, validated the information presented in the SAR. At the time of the agency review, only the initial pilot evaluation for the certification of an Ibero-American university had been completed. Additionally, no allegations, appeals, or complaints were submitted following the issuance of the final report.

Analysis

All the complaints and appeals are dealt with through similar procedures, regardless of the type of evaluation procedure. The panel can conclude that madri+d has established distinct procedures for complaints on the one hand with a digital contact form on the agency's website, and on the other hand a procedure for appeals involving an independent Guarantees and Complaints Committee. This pertains also to the two new activities CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA. The panel established that the complaints and appeals protocols are published on the agency's website and that there is a reasonable period within which complaints are responded to. The representatives of the HEIs whom the panel met were well aware that they can file a complaint or an appeal. The panel deduced that madri+d had an open communication culture that encouraged feedback and dialogue, which in turn resulted in a constructive relationship with stakeholders.

madri+d has experienced a limited number of complaints in recent years. Universities and business schools have indicated that formal complaints or appeals are often unnecessary, as most disagreements are effectively resolved during the review process or the provisional report stage, where institutions under review have the possibility to check reports for factual accuracy. Disagreements typically pertain to minor issues, such as consistency in terminology or slight adjustments to scoring criteria, which do not ultimately impact the overall judgement or decision. This perspective is corroborated by feedback from both the technical staff at madri+d and external members of the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission and International Accreditation Committee. Consequently, the panel is confident that the agency fulfils the criteria for ESG 2.7 in a reliable and credible manner.

The panel deduces that the agency's culture of consultation with stakeholders in the design and further development of processes and criteria, clear and well-written guides, an accessible and navigable website, the professionalism and engagement of agency staff, and the quality of the training for experts in combination with the good relationship with madri+d stakeholders results in a relatively small number of actual complaints or appeals that escalate to a formal dispute. Summarised, the review panel can confirm that the process of submitting and reviewing complaints and appeals functions well.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ENHANCEMENT AREAS

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

madri+d chose ESG 2.4 Peer-Review Experts as the enhancement area for its 2024 ENQA targeted review. A number of reasons were put forward by the agency for this selection in the SAR, the most important driver being the suggestions by the review panel in 2019. The report confirmed that madri+d were fully compliant with the standard, but contained the suggestion that madri+d increase the number of foreign experts in their evaluation panels to add international dimensions to the assessment processes. It was further suggested that the agency would benefit from an increase in the number of experts from outside the region of Madrid in processes of verification and monitoring. madri+d have experienced some success with recruiting reviewers from outside the Madrid higher education system, but most of these come from other universities in Spain. Naturally this brings certain advantages, such as familiarity with the context of the universities and programmes taught, knowledge of the details of legal regulations, and the overall culture of the Spanish higher education landscape. However madri+d acknowledges that the approaches of Spanish reviewers from parts of Spain other than the Madrid region, demonstrate some commonalities with local reviewers.

The current review panel supports this ambition of the agency as overrepresentation of experts from within the Madrid region, or within Spain, while not potentially problematic, is a missed opportunity. Similar voices can result in a paucity of other expertise or perspectives and diversity serves to extend perspectives brought into any discussion, creating opportunities for creativity enhancement and innovation among different viewpoints and experiences.

In selecting this standard, madri+d viewed this review as an opportunity to establish consistent mechanisms for integrating international experts into its evaluation bodies. The agency did not provide specific questions in advance for the panel to address; instead, it communicated its objective of gathering insights from external stakeholders, with the aim of exploring innovative perspectives to inform the agency's strategic development. During their preliminary meeting, the panel discussed and considered this objective alongside the agency's SWOT analysis. The proposal to conduct a 60-minute interactive workshop received the agency's support, leading to invitations extended to a diverse representation of higher education stakeholders. The seventeen participants included a student reviewer, institutional representatives ranging from QA officers to vice-rectors and professors, colleagues from other Spanish QA agencies, and various madri+d staff members. The workshop was chaired by a member of the review panel and facilitated by other panel members, while the review panel itself did not participate in the discussions.

Methodology of the workshop

The review panel asked the agency to send the following questions in advance to the intended participants with the specific request that they give thought to the questions, note their answers and bring these to the workshop: "Could you identify specific benefits and problems derived from broadening diversity in panels and committees by including international experts?" and "How could the agency overcome the identified problems / obtain the desired benefits?"

Participants worked in groups with an even distribution of the QA professionals, professors, rectors and madri+d staff. This was intended to encourage as broad a range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experience as possible in the subgroups. The panel observed that every participant had brought extensive notes answering the two questions above. The first activity in the workshop was "brainwriting" - each group had a poster with two columns, *benefits* and *challenges*. Using their "homework" as inspiration, the groups wrote as much as possible in a given time, and in a certain colour. They then passed the paper to the next group, who proceeded to respond (in a different

colour) to what the first group had written in terms of feasibility, possibilities and potential dilemmas. Time restrictions permitted only two rounds but the output of the groups was rich. For the second part of the workshop, the groups were each given a large poster, divided into sections for each individual participant, and a section in the centre to collate the best responses, and a separate instruction handout. The question on the poster was “How can Madri+d increase the diversity among experts to ensure different points of view, experiences and approaches to QA?” Participants were instructed to first work in silence, writing in their section, inspired by their preparation prior to the workshop. Then they discussed their answers, and as a group put the best responses in the centre section. The posters from the two sessions were collected and recorded by the panel.

The workshop and group discussions were highly engaging with active and enthusiastic involvement from all participants. The opportunity to explore and openly discuss the agency’s methodologies, and potential for further change and enhanced impact was clearly welcomed, as the large number of participants, some of whom had travelled quite far for this one session, proved. The panel observed that participants in the workshop were evidently engaged with the topic of international experts in higher education evaluation and support madri+d in their remit.

Workshop output (full list in Annex)

The workshop participants had been asked beforehand to specifically consider any anticipated benefits of involving more international experts, as well as challenges or problems that might arise. The panel observed a degree of consistency in the answers to these questions and as such took note of the more common answers as well as some of the outliers.

Benefits: A consensus arising from the workshop discussions is that there is a much greater potential for the agency to achieve diversity in panels, committees, and governing bodies. The participants anticipated that international experts in panels and committees would result not only in a more objective and richer evaluation process, but could also prove a catalyst for increased innovation and enhancement in higher education, as well as creating more opportunities for international collaboration in projects. External experts from abroad can lend credibility to madri+d activities, and enhance the legitimacy and global standing of the agency’s evaluation and certification processes. The participants acknowledged that an overfamiliarity with a system can sometimes hinder innovation and growth. Experts not presently active in the Madrid or Spanish HE system would bring different perspectives and outlooks and feasibly be more capable of identifying any hiatuses in policies or programmes, highlighting areas for improvement.

Challenges: During the workshop discussions many participants acknowledged that a significant barrier to including more international experts as members of panels, committees, and governing bodies is the added expense of any resulting logistics for travel and accommodation expenses in the case of face-to-face procedures. Another potential challenge is that of time differences. While there are substantial numbers of fluent Spanish-speaking potential experts in time zones nearer Madrid, involving people from Ibero-America would be taxing and complicated. Cultural differences or differences with regard to how standards are interpreted and upheld gave some unease, as did the issue of sufficient mastery of Spanish. A last misgiving concerned the willingness of international experts to engage with madri+d evaluation activities - a number of the stakeholders present speculated that participation in expert panels or commissions might not hold sufficient prestige for experts to be prepared to be available.

Proposed actions:

The stakeholders present during the workshop had considered all suggestions and collated those deemed most feasible. A robust underpinning to successfully implement policy and strategy begins with

the appropriate expertise within the agency - it was strongly recommended to ensure a sustainable focus on internationalisation undertakings within the agency, preferably with a dedicated staff member. An internationalisation specialist would not only contribute to the existing international activities in Ibero-America but also maintain close contact with other QA bodies in Europe and further afield, as well as assuming responsibility for any potential synergies between madri+d and similar organisations in the context of European Projects and financing. A logical step from the perspective of the stakeholders was to, together with other Spanish QA agencies, co-create a data-base of experts in the EHEA that all Spanish QA agencies contribute to and benefit from. This would also include Spanish(speaking) students abroad. This database could be promoted and made highly visible by means of a concerted and sustainable public relations campaign on diverse platforms, that would also reach Erasmus students or visiting academics on exchange at Spanish universities. Another potentially valuable demographic to consider is Spanish academics who have previously held positions at universities abroad in the recent past. Training international experts and students to be familiar with the Spanish HE systems emerged as vital to the success and validity of madri+d's evaluation processes. An addition to the formal training could be creating a pool of more experienced experts to act as mentors for new international experts.

It was further suggested that madri+d further develop the virtual and hybrid aspects of evaluation methods to facilitate and make more affordable the participation of international experts. Some other suggestions included employing international experts efficiently and effectively: an international expert might only evaluate certain criteria, and conceivably take on a role that does not require extensive knowledge of the Spanish legal framework. A last interesting suggestion emerging from the workshop was to engage international experts not just in the review panels but also in high-level commissions and committees to develop strategies or analyse results.

Panel reflections

In the SAR and the preliminary meeting with the review panel, madri+d explained that they agreed with the recommendation from the previous review panel in 2019 to find consistent mechanisms to incorporate international experts into its evaluation bodies. In fact, the new procedure for institutional evaluation in Ibero-America, Sello SOFIA, specifies including a mandatory panel member from the country in which the university under review is situated. The agency is aware that their other procedures would also benefit from the diversity and different perspectives international experts can bring, but they struggle to find manners in which to achieve this. Hence the inclusion of ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts as the selected enhancement area.

The workshop proved to be a highly engaging and productive experience for the review panel, particularly for the external stakeholders and agency staff in attendance. The panel was pleased to observe that all participants had thoroughly prepared by reflecting on the task's guiding questions in advance. This preparation facilitated meaningful discussions on the challenges and advantages of involving more international experts, leading to a highly effective workshop. The dialogue generated during the two primary tasks highlighted a range of constructive ideas and actionable suggestions, enriched by the diverse perspectives represented in the room. Despite the varied viewpoints, a general consensus emerged regarding the benefits, challenges, and proposed actions related to the inclusion of more international experts.

It was evident to the review panel that stakeholders see the agency as a valued partner and share a collective sense of responsibility within the Madrid higher education landscape. The panel encourages madri+d to leverage the momentum generated by the workshop and consider hosting additional events to further develop and implement strategic actions in collaboration with higher education institutions, student unions, and other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

1. madri+d has in place effective mechanisms for collecting and acting upon stakeholder feedback in a continuous effort to improve and enhance its performance.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

1. The panel endorses the agency's culture of regularly updating its methodology and responding in an agile manner to legislative changes in quality assurance in their evaluation methodologies.
2. madri+d is commended for the involvement of stakeholder representatives of higher education institutions, regional authorities and industry in further developing assessment procedures.
3. The panel commends the agency in their efforts to simplify evaluation processes which are positively welcomed by the HEIs.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

1. The panel commends the agency for its programme of training and briefing experts for their role in programme and institutional evaluations.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

1. The panel commends madri+d on their concerted efforts to ensure criteria are applied in a consistent manner by means of training of experts, support by technicians or secretaries, and scrutiny by the committees/commissions.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

1. The review panel commends the agency on the comprehensive and detailed reporting of the activities and conclusions of its expert panels.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

ESG 2.6 Reporting

1. The panel recommends that the final version of the provisional report be presented to the president of the expert panel for endorsement prior to finalisation and publication.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

1. The panel suggests collaboration with other agencies nationally in areas where madri+d is working within the same regulatory framework and who are also currently exploring the use of AI for collating data in evaluation reports.

2. The panel encourages madri+d to use its regular meetings with the stakeholders, including students, as an opportunity to seek their inputs in planning its future thematic analyses and identifying their topics.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

- I. The panel suggests that the agency gives consideration to promoting further engagement of female representatives within its expert panels and commissions, specifically in the role of president of expert panels.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

- I. The panel suggests that particular attention be paid to the systemic involvement of students at all times when developing and updating methodologies.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

- I. The panel suggests that the agency gives consideration to including more experts from outside the Madrid region and further afield, outside Spain, in expert panels, and ask ESU to forward their experts' pool of the Spanish speaking students outside the country.
2. The panel suggests also including lecturers from business schools for the CUALIFICAM expert panels.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
12 th September 2024 - Online meeting with the agency's resource person				
1 Mon 2/09	120 min	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for site visit	Review panel	
2 Thurs 12/09	90 min	An online clarifications meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency)	Review panel Madri+d representatives: Director, madri+d Head of Internal Quality Area, madri+d	
Day I, morning, 24.09.2024				
3 Tue 24/09	60 min	Review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations for day I		
4 Tue 24/09	As necessary	A pre-visit meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify any remaining questions after the online clarifications meeting		
Day I, afternoon, 24.09.2024, madri+d staff				
	13.00 13.30	Review panel's private meeting		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
5 Tue 24/09	13.30 14.15	Meeting with the Director and the President of the Board of Trustees	Director madri+d Regional Minister for Education, Science and Universities of the Region of Madrid Vice-Minister for Universities, Research and Science of the Region of Madrid General Director of Universities of the Region of Madrid General Director for Research and Technological Innovation of the Regional Government of Madrid	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
	14.15 14.30	Review panel's private discussion		
6 Tue 24/09	14.30 15.15	Meeting with the Heads of Unit of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Area	Head of Verification and Modification Area, madri+d Head of Monitoring Area, madri+d Head of Internal Quality Area, madri+d Quality Officer (2x)	Arnoldas Solovjovas
	15.15 15.30	Review panel's private discussion		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
7 Tue 24/09	15.30 16.30	Meeting with the agency staff/representatives on the agency's self-selected enhancement area	Head of Internal Quality Area, madri+d Head of Monitoring Area, madri+d Quality Officer, madri+d Head of Verification and Modification Area, madri+d Quality Officer. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid Reviewer Student. Universidad Complutense de Madrid Quality Officer. Universidad San Pablo CEU Reviewer. Full Professor. Universidad de Alcalá Quality Officer. ACPUA Quality Officer. ACSUCYL Vice Rector of Academic Planning and Quality Universidad Villanueva Vice Rector of Academic Planning and Quality CUNEF Universidad Full Professor Universidad Rey Juan Carlos Secretary of CUALIFICAM madri+d Professor Universidad Rey Juan Carlos Full Professor Universidad Autónoma de Madrid Vice Rector for Studies and Quality Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio	Carmen Fenoll
	16.30 16.45	Break (panel only)		
8 Tue 24/09	16.45 17.30	Meeting with representatives of the Advisory Committee and Advisory Council.	President of the Advisory Committee. Universidad Pompeu Fabra Member of the Advisory Committee. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid Member of the Advisory Committee. Universidad Militar de Nueva Granada – Colombia (Online) Member of the Advisory Council. Universidad Francisco de Vitoria Member of the Advisory Council. Universidad San Pablo CEU Member of the Advisory Council. Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
9	17.30 18.00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 2		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
Day 2, 25.09.2024, madri+d staff & external stakeholders				
	8.30 9.30	Review panel's private meeting		
10 Wed 25/09	9.30 10.15	Meeting with representatives related to Sello SOFIA: Secretary and members of the International Accreditation Committee	Secretary of Sello SOFIA. Universidad Complutense de Madrid President of the International Accreditation Committee. Universidad de Girona Member of the International Accreditation Committee. UNIR	Carmen Fenoll
	10.15 10.30	Review panel's private discussion		
11 Wed 25/09	10.30 11.15	Meeting with representatives related to CUALIFICAM: Secretary and members of the CUALIFICAM Certification Commission	Secretary of CUALIFICAM madri+d Member of CUALIFICAM Certification Commission. Member of CUALIFICAM Certification Commission. Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
	11.15 11.30	Review panel's private discussion		
12 Wed 25/09	11.30 12.15	Meeting with representatives related to SISCAL madri+d: Members of the Certification Committee and experts from the Working Group of the updated guide	Member of SISCAL Certification Committee. IE Universidad Member of SISCAL Certification Committee. Universidad de Oviedo Expert in the working group. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid Expert in the working group. Universidad de Oviedo (Online)	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
	12.15 13.15	Lunch (panel only)		
	13.15 13.30	Review panel's private discussion		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
13 Wed 25/09	13.30 14.15	Meeting with students involved in evaluations: panels and committees of SISCAL, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA	Reviewer Student CUALIFICAM. Universidad Internacional de Valencia Reviewer Student CUALIFICAM and SISCAL. Universidad de Zaragoza Reviewer Student CUALIFICAM. Universidad de Valladolid Reviewer Student Sello SOFIA. Universidad Carlos III (Online) Reviewer Student SISCAL. Universidad de Cantabria Reviewer Student SISCAL. Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Arnoldas Solovjovas
	14.15 14.30	Review panel's private discussion		
14 Wed 25/09	14.30 15.15	Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/ HEI representatives	Rector. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid Director of Quality and Planification. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid Rector. Universidad Nebrija Rector. Universidad Europea de Madrid Rector. Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira – Colombia (Online) Director. ISDI Escuela de Negocios Directora. IEP Instituto Europeo de Postgrado	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
	15.15 15.30	Review panel's private discussion		
15 Wed 25/09	15.30 16.15	Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs	Director of Quality. Universidad de Alcalá Head of the Teaching Quality Area. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos Head of Teaching Quality Area. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid Director of Quality Department and Institutional Evaluation. Universidad Francisco de Vitoria Quality Office. Universidad Camilo José Cela Head of Quality Area. Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira Colombia (Online)	Carmen Fenoll
	16.15 16.30	Review panel's private discussion		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
16 Wed 25/09	16.30 17.15	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool: panels and committees of SISCAL, CUALIFICAM and Sello SOFIA	Reviewer CUALIFICAM Reviewer CUALIFICAM. Universidad Complutense de Madrid Reviewer CUALIFICAM. Universidad Francisco de Vitoria Reviewer Sello SOFIA Universidad de Granada Reviewer Sello SOFIA. Qualipliance (Online) Reviewer SISCAL Universidad de Valladolid Reviewer SISCAL. Comunidad de Madrid	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
17	17.15 18.15	Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day 3 and provisional conclusions		
Day 3, 26.09.2024, external stakeholders & conclusions				
	8.30 9.30	Review panel's private meeting		
18 Thurs 26/09	9.30 10.15	Meeting with stakeholders, such as employers, community	General Secretary. CEIM, Confederación Empresarial de Madrid-CEOE Director. Fundación IMDEA Software President of the Social Council. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid General Secretary. Trade Union CCOO-Universidad Complutense de Madrid Vice-President of Institutional Relations and Projects. CREUP Director of the Postgraduate Department. CSIC	Carmen Fenoll
	10.15 10.30	Review panel's private discussion		
19	10.30 11.30	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	LEAD PANEL MEMBER
20	11.30 12.30 min	A session to further investigate additional topics that may arise during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG (as necessary)	Head of Verification and Modification Area, madri+d Head of Monitoring Area, madri+d Quality Officer, madri+d (3x)	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
	12.30 13.30	Lunch (panel only)		
21 Thurs 26/09	13.30 14.15 min	Meeting with Director to clarify any pending issues	Director, madri+d Head of Internal Quality Area, madri+d	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen
22	14.15 15.45	Private meeting between panel members to agree on the main findings		
23 Thurs 26/09	15.45 16.15	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	Director, madri+d Head of Verification and Modification Area, madri+d Head of Monitoring Area, madri+d Head of Internal Quality Area, madri+d Quality Officer, madri+d (3x) Administration Officer, madri+d Secretary of CUALIFICAM, madri+d	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

Targeted review of Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d against the ESG

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The present Terms of Reference were agreed between Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d (applicant), ENQA (coordinator) and EQAR.

January 2024

1. Background

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 06/2015 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration based on a targeted external review against *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* coordinated by ENQA.

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2015 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Accreditation of official degree programmes
- Assessment of the programmes' development plan
- CUALIFICAM programme
- DOCENTIA
- Ex-ante evaluation of master programmes in the arts
- Institutional Accreditation
- Joint programme evaluation
- Modification of official degree programmes
- Monitoring of official degree programmes
- SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification⁴

⁴ Including the newest additions to the criteria regarding (a) expanding the scope to centres that teach doctoral programmes and (b) university centres that manage non-official programmes. Further details on the changes since the last review, i.e. the introduction of SOFIA programme and CUALIFICAM programme and changes in the

- SOFIA programme
- Validation (ex-ante accreditation) of official degree programmes

All these activities will be included on the agency's profile on the EQAR website and linked to DEQAR database. NB: The agency may not upload reports from other activities to DEQAR.

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Scientific Culture and Communication Area
- Technology Transfer and European Programmes Area
- Technology Based Entrepreneurship Area

While these activities are not relevant to the application for renewal on EQAR, it is Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

2. Purpose and scope of the targeted review

This review will evaluate the extent to which Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d's application to EQAR.

The review will be further used as part of the agency's renewal of membership in ENQA.

2.1 Focus areas

A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:

- ESG 2.6 due to absence of publication of the reports resulting from the assessments of institutions' programmes development plans
- ESG 3.4 due to lack of publication of thematic analyses as understood by the standard
- ESG 3.6 due to the need to demonstrate sufficiently how ESG compliance is assured when making decisions based on reports issued by external agencies not registered in EQAR.

B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:

- The SOFIA programme

SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology are available in EQAR's decisions [here](#) and [here](#).

- b. The CUALIFICAM programme
- C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes:
 - a. ESG 2.1 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology covers all the standards of ESG Part 1 in practice
 - b. ESG 2.2 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology is fit for the new objectives
 - c. ESG 2.5 regarding whether the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification standards are applied consistently.
 - d. ESG 2.6 regarding whether all the reports resulting from the updated SISCAL madri+d - Internal Quality Assurance Certification methodology are published in full
- D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;
- E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 2.4
- F) Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any).

These issues should be investigated by the review panel as far as possible, providing an analysis and conclusion on the ESG standard(s) concerned.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted in line with the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications* and *the Policy on Targeted Reviews*, and following the methodology described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Agreement on the Terms of Reference between EQAR, Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d and ENQA;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by ENQA;
- Self-assessment by Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Analysis of the final review report and decision-making by the EQAR Register Committee;
- Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board;

- Attendance to the online follow-up seminar.

3.1 Independence of the review coordinator

The coordinator has not provided remunerated (e.g. consultancy) or unremunerated services to Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d during the past 5 years, and conversely Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d has not provided any remunerated or unremunerated services to the coordinator.

3.2 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members including an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member and one other expert. At least two members are from another country.

At least one panel member should be a quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years. When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and one as the review secretary. At least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. At least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator (an ENQA staff member) who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The Review Coordinator will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

ENQA will provide the agency with the proposed panel composition and the curricula vitae of the panel members to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The reviewers will have to agree to a non-conflict of interest statement that is incorporated in their contract for the review of this agency.

Once appointed, the coordinator will inform EQAR about the appointed panel members.

3.3 Self-assessment by Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

- a description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- a description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- a section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (see 2.1 Focus areas);
- a SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole;
- for each of the individual standards enlisted above (see section 2) a consideration of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal (if applicable).

The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and continues to meet the ESG and thus the requirements for EQAR registration.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the review coordinator, which has two weeks to carry out a screening. The purpose of a screening is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The coordinator will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, is present. If the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to ask for a revised version within two weeks.

The final version of the agency's self-assessment report is then submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit. The agency publishes the completed SAR on its website and sends the link to ENQA. ENQA will publish this link on its website as well.

3.4 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule considering the aspects included under the focus area (as defined under point 2.1 of the Terms of Reference).

The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit. The approved schedule shall be given to Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The site visit should enable the review panel to explore how the agency has addressed the standards where it has been found to be partially compliant (if the case), aspects of substantive change, consideration of internal quality assurance (ESG 2.1) and the self-selected ESG standard(s) for enhancement. The panel will include extra time during the site-visit to address any other arising issues (if the case) that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency.

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR to clarify the review expectations and address any possible arising matters.

In advance of the site visit (at least two weeks before the site visit), the panel will organise an obligatory online meeting with the agency. This meeting is held to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of:

- The specific national/legal context in which the agency operates;
- The specific quality assurance system to which the agency belongs;
- The key characteristics of the agency's external QA activities.

3.5 Preparation and completion of the final review report

The review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. In particular, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR⁵.

The external report will present the facts and analysis reflecting the reality at the time of review. This will form the main basis for the Register Committee's decision making.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After panel has considered coordinator's feedback, the report will go to the agency for comment on factual accuracy. If

⁵ See here: https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC_I2_I_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v3_0.pdf

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report.

Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d and submit the document for scrutiny to ENQA's Agency Review Committee and then to EQAR along with the remaining application documents (self-evaluation report, Declaration of Honour, statement to review report-if applicable). The report is to be finalised normally within 2-4 months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 30 pages in length. All panel members will sign off on the final version of the external review report. The coordinator will provide to Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d the [Declaration of Honour](#) together with the final report.

4. Publication and use of the report

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Agency Review Committee has validated the report. Prior to the final validation of the report, the ENQA Agency Review Committee may request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification from the review panel, review coordinator or the agency if needed. The review report will be published on ENQA website regardless of the review outcome. The report will also be published on the EQAR website together with the decision on registration, regardless of the outcome.

ENQA will retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the review panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, will be vested in ENQA. In the case of an unsuccessful application to EQAR, the report may also be used by the ENQA Board to reach a conclusion on whether the agency can be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.

5. Decision-making on EQAR registration and ENQA membership

The agency will submit the review report via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency will also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), the Declaration of Honour and any other relevant documents to the application to EQAR (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report).

EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in March 2025. The Register Committee's final judgement on the agency's compliance with the ESG as a whole can either be substantially compliant (approval of the application) or not substantially compliant (rejection of the application). In case of a positive decision (substantially compliant with the ESG), the registration is renewed for a further five years (from the date of the review report).

The decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board will take place after EQAR Register Committee decision.

To apply for ENQA membership, the agency is requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which the agency expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be considered by the Board together with the confirmation of EQAR listing when deciding on the agency's membership. Should the agency not be granted the registration in EQAR or the registration is not renewed, the decision on ENQA membership will be taken based on the final review report, the application letter, and the statement from the Agency Review Committee. The decision on membership will be published on ENQA's website.

6. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	February 2024
Appointment of review panel members	March 2024
Self-assessment report (SAR) completed by Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d	10 May 2024
Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	May 2024
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	June 2024
Briefing of review panel members	July 2024
Review panel site visit	September 2024
Submission of the draft review report to ENQA Review Coordinator	October 2024
Factual check of the review report by the Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d	November 2024
Statement of Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d to review panel (if applicable)	December 2024
Submission of review report to ENQA	December 2024
Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee	February 2025
EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application by Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d	Spring 2025
Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board	Summer 2025

ANNEX 3: OUTPUT WORKSHOP

The review panel asked the agency to send the following questions in advance to the intended participants with the specific request that they give thought to the questions, note their answers and bring these to the workshop: “Could you identify specific benefits and problems derived from broadening diversity in panels and committees by including international experts?” and “How could the agency overcome the identified problems / obtain the desired benefits?”

Regarding **benefits**, participants most commonly suggested:

- Experts at a remove from the Spanish higher education system would guarantee a greater degree of impartiality and objective reasoning.
- Experts not currently professionally active in the Spanish HE system would bring different perspectives and outlooks of IQA and perhaps be more able to help identify any gaps or oversights in policies or programmes, highlighting areas for improvement.
- International experts have less vested interest in the outcome of an evaluation which may lead to a more impartial and accurate assessment of an institution, programme or IQA system.
- Outside experts can lend credibility to processes, and enhance the legitimacy and global standing of madri+d evaluation and certification processes.
- International experts could encourage a panel to embrace a range of cultural and academic perspectives. These perspectives act as a turning mechanism, introducing fresh viewpoints and preventing a potential insular vision, while stimulating rich discussion.
- By integrating expertise external to Spain, madri+d could ensure that multinational panels could benchmark innovation efforts in HE, aligned with broader developments globally.
- Panels with an international component could, within the required specific framework in the Madrid region, apply evaluation approaches and methodologies proven successful in other countries.
- Synergies and opportunities for professional collaborations could arise.
- Trends in quality assurance abroad could be disseminated in the Madrid region.
- The results of meta evaluations could be enriched by collaborating with international bodies.

Anticipated **challenges or problems** were given as follows:

- Financial resources, and the paucity thereof, present a significant challenge.
- Logistics, whether for online (time differences) or in-person procedures.
- Language, namely that experts need a high mastery of Spanish - especially for the reports, which are required to be extremely clear and not open to interpretation.
- Difficulties fitting international experts into the Spanish legal framework.
- International experts would require intensive training, not just in the procedure but in the national and regional legislation and frameworks.
- Conducting evaluations for madri+d may not have sufficient status in the eyes of some international experts.
- The actual workings of Spanish universities are so specific, international experts might not focus on the correct issues.
- There might be cultural differences and differences in expectations or standards.

The objective of the second part of the workshop was to collect proposed actions to **overcome the identified problems / obtain the desired benefits**.

- Create a collaborative database for experts in the EHEA that all Spanish QA agencies contribute to and benefit from, and promote this with a concerted and sustainable public relations campaign on diverse platforms. Coupled to this is the development of training of international experts in Spanish HE systems.
- Compile a template with guidelines with requirements for QA experts, specified by profile.
- Consider a specific database for Spanish(speaking) students abroad and train them - ensure a mentoring component for experienced student panel members to share their expertise.
- Budget for fees and expenses, as well as honorariums: seek contact with QA agencies in other parts of the world and discover how they budget for experts.
- Consider creating reviewer exchange possibilities, with a memorandum of understanding with other international entities.
- Explore the possibility of involving Erasmus students or visiting professors as evaluators.
- Investigate the potential for synergies between madri+d and similar organisations in the context of European Projects and financing.
- Ensure madri+d has a staff member focussed on internationalisation and increase staff participation in international QA events.
- Consider how European organisations could facilitate networking for Spanish-speaking experts.
- Further develop the virtual and hybrid aspects of evaluation methods to facilitate and make more affordable the participation of international experts.
- Foster on-line meetings, and focus international experts in activities that can be made on-line.
- Employ international experts efficiently and effectively: an international expert might only evaluate certain criteria.

ANNEX 4: GLOSSARY

AEEN	Asociación Española de Escuelas de Negocios
ANECA	National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain
CREUP	Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
ESU	European Student Union
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HEQAA	Higher Education Quality Assurance Area (specific madri+d QA activity)
IQAS	internal quality assurance systems
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act
QA	quality assurance
REACU	Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies
SAR	self-assessment report

ANNEX 5. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY MADRI+D

The SAR included links to a wide range of information and documents.

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL AND/OR MADE AVAILABLE BY MADRI+D UPON REQUEST

- SISCAL madri+d guide and related annexes, including the template for SISCAL reports and access to all definite SISCAL reports on the madri+d website.
- (In strict accordance with the confidentiality statements signed by the panel) Access to an as yet unpublished or made definite SISCAL report corresponding to the updated SISCAL guidelines.
- List of authorisations of new universities and university centres and a list of evaluation procedures which have used accreditations from other agencies.
- The action plan for IQAS from 2023 (part of the Annual Management Review) and the schedule for “needed actions” resulting from the IQAS in 2023 (part of the Annual Management Review).
- The IQAS meta evaluation from 2023 of quality assurance processes.
- A list of the agencies (listed or not listed in EQAR) from which madri+d has used documentation/accreditation decisions in madri+d’s own EQA-procedures in 2023.
- Details of the composition of evaluation bodies per type of procedure by origin, expertise, and gender in 2023.
- madri+d’s complete training programme for members of expert panels.
- madri+d substantive change report to EQAR 2023
- madri+d substantive change report to EQAR 2024
- madri+d webpage

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW 2025

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Targeted Review of the Fundación para el Conocimiento madrimasd (madri+d), undertaken in 2024.