

AVEPRO

C. GUIDELINES
FOR
EXTERNAL EVALUATION





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➤ Introduction

These **guidelines for the EXTERNAL evaluation of quality** are part of a **set of guidelines proposed by the Agency** and should be considered as **integrating and providing more detail to complement the AVEPRO Guidelines¹**:

A. *Guidelines: Nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality Evaluation*
(in short: *AVEPRO Guidelines*)



B. *Guidelines for SELF-EVALUATION*



C. *Guidelines for EXTERNAL EVALUATION*



D. *Guidelines on STRATEGIC PLANNING*



E. *The Ecclesiastical Higher Education System in the global world*
The RATIONALE of AVEPRO'S EVALUATION SYSTEM

Reference should therefore be made to the latter regarding the general context of external evaluation.

¹ AVEPRO, *Guidelines: nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality evaluation and promotion*, 2019.



➤ **External evaluation within the context of the cycle of Quality Assurance and strategic planning**

The following provides a **general summary of the cycle of Quality Assurance**

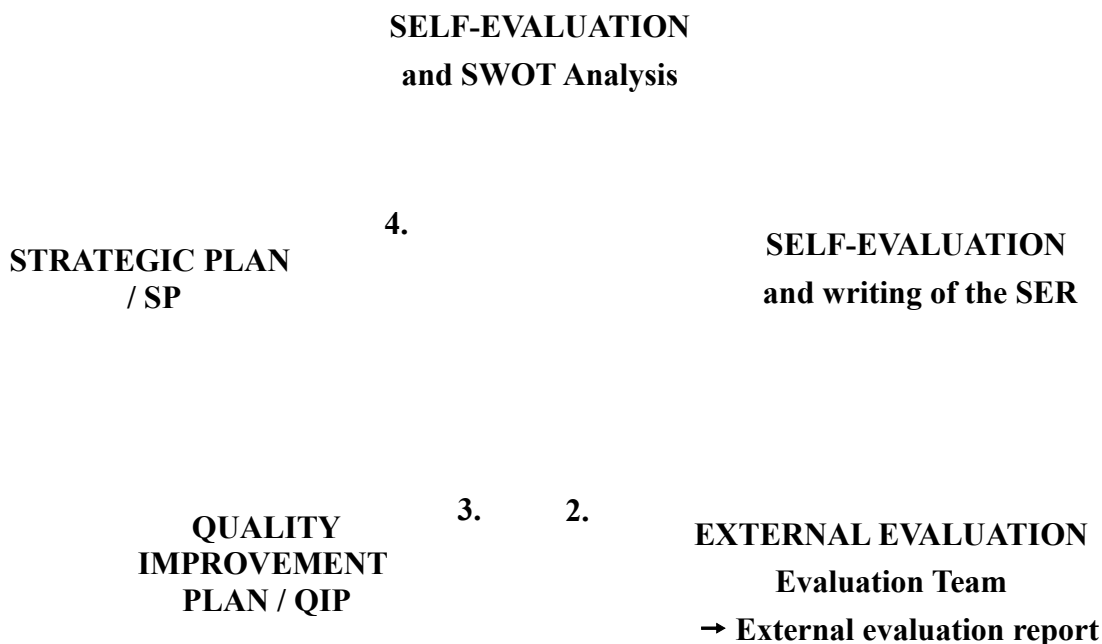


Figure 1 - General summary of the cycle of Quality Assurance

It is helpful to bear in mind that the cycle of Quality Assurance is composed of several phases:

- 1. INTERNAL evaluation or SELF-EVALUATION (1.)**
- 2. EXTERNAL evaluation (2.)**
- 3. Quality Improvement Plan / QIP (3.)**
- 4. Strategic planning (4.)**

These phases both stand alone and are closely interconnected, especially from the second cycle of evaluation onwards. As can be seen from the table below, each phase is characterized by an “end product”, which represents both the conclusion of one cycle and the beginning of/basis for subsequent phases and cycles.

Phase	Actor	Focus	End product	
INTERNAL Evaluation or SELF-EVALUATION	Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analysis • data collection • evaluation of the current state of the Institution 	Self-Evaluation Report /SER	CONFIDENTIAL (for the Institution, Evaluation Team and AVEPRO)
EXTERNAL Evaluation	Evaluation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation of the state of the Institution 	External Evaluation Report	Public and disseminated online via AVEPRO website (also delivered to CCE, Grand Chancellors and any other academic authorities)
	Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation of structure and critical analysis • exchanges and constructive dialogue with the Evaluation Team 		
Strategic planning	Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Report 	Quality Improvement Plan/QIP	Public
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality improvement 	Strategic plan /SP	Public

Table 1 – Phases, actors, focuses, end products of the Quality Assurance Process

For further details regarding the phase of self-evaluation and the Self-Evaluation Report / SER, reference should be made to the **Guidelines for Self-Evaluation 2019²**.

For further details regarding strategic planning, the Quality Improvement Plan / QIP and the Strategic Plan / SP reference should be made to the **Guidelines on Strategic Planning 2019³**.

The external evaluation phase is conducted by an **External Evaluation Team**, especially selected by AVEPRO in line with the characteristics of each individual Institution to be evaluated. It is important to underline that, in order to fulfil the task entrusted to it in the best possible way, the Evaluation Team requires **the Institution's support and cooperation**. The Institution has specific important tasks during all phases of evaluation (see subsequent paragraphs). It should also be reiterated here that particular attention needs to be paid to the quality of the relationship and interactions between the Institution and the Evaluation Team.

The following table shows the **timeline for external evaluation** and the steps to be taken by the three main actors: AVEPRO, the Evaluation Team and the Institution.

² AVEPRO, *Guidelines for Self-Evaluation*, 2019

³ AVEPRO, *Guidelines on Strategic Planning*, 2019.

EXTERNAL evaluation		
Who	What	When
➡ INSTITUTION and EVALUATION TEAM	Establishment of date for site visit (contacts between the Institution and members of the Evaluation Team)	at least 7 weeks prior to the site visit
➡ AVEPRO	SER is delivered to the Evaluation Team	at least 6 weeks prior to the site visit
➡ Evaluation TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of the SER (using <i>SER analysis FORM</i> 2019)• Exchange of ideas regarding unanswered questions and issues to be dealt with during the site visit (among Team members)	from 6 weeks prior to the site visit
➡ INSTITUTION	Organization of Evaluation Team’s travel and logistic arrangements	5 weeks prior to the site visit
➡ INSTITUTION and Evaluation TEAM	Definition of a schedule for the visit	
➡ Evaluation TEAM	SITE VISIT by the EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM	
	Evaluation Team drafts the Evaluation Report	within 6 weeks from the end of the visit
	Final draft of the Evaluation Report is sent to the Institution by the President of the Evaluation Team	
➡ INSTITUTION	Any factual corrections to the Evaluation Report are sent to the President of the Evaluation Team within 2 weeks of receipt of the Report → In the case of objections deemed substantial by the Institution, appeal regarding the contents of the Report (see the dedicated section of this document and point 4.4 of the AVEPRO Guidelines 2019)	within 8 weeks from the end of the site visit (within 2 weeks of receipt of the Report) → in the case of appeal against the Report, the timeline changes
➡ Evaluation TEAM	The President of the Evaluation Team sends the Evaluation Report to AVEPRO (definitive version)	within 8 weeks from the end of the site visit
➡ AVEPRO	The Evaluation Report is sent to the authorities : the Congregation for Catholic Education/CCE, the Grand Chancellor and any other academic authorities (Dean, Head, Rector), then published on the Agency’s website	within 10 weeks from the end of the site visit

Table 2 – Timeline of External Evaluation

➤ The External Evaluation TEAM



The external evaluation phase is entrusted to an External Evaluation Team especially selected by AVEPRO bearing in mind the characteristics of each individual Institution. The Team acts impartially and is granted a high degree of operational independence in the conduct of its tasks.

• ***Characteristics of the Evaluation Team***

The composition of the Evaluation Team varies according to the size of the Institution:

- **a president**
- **one/two/three thematic expert(s)**
- **one student representative**

It is important to underline that clarity regarding each member of the Evaluation Team's responsibilities and tasks is fundamental from the very outset, and that **decisions regarding the contents of the Evaluation Report must be taken in a collegial manner, based on joint work and constructive criticism**. This means that the Team does not have a hierarchical structure, and that the members have both common and specific functions, the latter connected to their particular roles.

The functions in common can be summarised as follows:

- studying the SER prior to the visit
- preparing own observations on the SER
- participating in Team meetings
- participating in meetings with different categories of people during the site visit
- providing comments and observations for the preliminary drafts of the Report, so that the final version reflects the points of view of the whole group
- participating in the conclusive meeting of the site visit
- providing support in the preparation of the final Report.

The more specific functions related to individual roles are summarised in the table below:

	Tasks
President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinates the schedule for the visit, together with the Institution • coordinates the work of the Team, assigning individual members the task of taking notes on particular areas during the site visit (e.g. research, teaching and learning, etc.) • maintains contacts with the Institution and the Agency • is in charge of drawing up the final version of the Report • sends the final version of the Report to the Institution for any factual corrections or “response” • sends the definitive Evaluation Report to AVEPRO
Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the president in conducting the evaluation during the site visit • provide specific thematic viewpoints regarding the subjects taught at the Institution • provide their own observations on the SER during the site visit and when drawing up the Evaluation Report • help the president draw up the Evaluation Report

Tasks	
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides specific support to the Team in understanding students' viewpoints, during both analysis of the SER and the site visit • supports the Team's work in all phases of evaluation

Table 3 – Specific tasks of the Team members

AVEPRO has a vast database of high profile international experts from which it selects the Team members, taking into account their specific skills and competences:

- experience in the subject (or subjects) that characterise the specific area(s) of activity of the Institution to be evaluated
- an interest in the promotion of Quality and willingness to carry out evaluations
- knowledge and understanding of the areas in which the Institution to be evaluated operates
- specific language skills that permit reading and comprehension of the SER and other documents provided by the Institution, as well as easy interaction with the academic community
- (only for the student representative) must be over 18 and be studying in the second or third cycle.

In order to foster the international nature of the Institutions and AVEPRO's "universal" vocation, particular attention is focused on the origin of the experts who make up the Evaluation Team: the president should (when possible) be of a different nationality from the State in which the Institution to be evaluated is located; the thematic experts and the student representative should also (when possible) be at least from different cities than that in which the Institution operates.

• *Objectives of the Evaluation Team*

The Evaluation Team's objectives are many and can be summarised under macro areas related to the implementation of the Institution's system of Quality Assurance:

- evaluate the current state of the Institution
- evaluate the Institution's perception of itself, as expressed in the SER
- make useful suggestions and recommendations for the Institution.

As the Team's ultimate aim is to effectively help improve the Institution's Quality Assurance, it is very important that the **Team's and Institution's work is characterised by mutual trust and transparency**, and that a positive relationship and openness to dialogue are maintained.

• *Functions of the Evaluation Team*

The process of Quality Assurance is a complex activity subdivided into different operative phases. In general, the Team fulfils various functions, which can be summarised as follows:

- study the SER
- physically visit the Institution
- clarify and check the details in the SER, and examine any other relevant documentation



- evaluate the Institution's activities in the light of the SER
- evaluate the Institution's effective situation
- check the state of the Institution's Quality Assurance
- express observations regarding the situations encountered
- provide recommendations for improvement
- prepare a draft Report and present its key elements in a report to staff and students at the end of the site visit
- draw up the final version of the Evaluation Report
- send the Report to the Institution for any factual corrections or “response”, according to the schedule provided by AVEPRO
- send the Report to AVEPRO.

► **The Institution and the external evaluation visit**

The Institution supports the Evaluation Team during all phases of the site visit.

From an internal viewpoint, the Institution should possess the structures necessary for the process of Quality Assurance, as also specified in the AVEPRO Guidelines 2019⁴:

- Quality Committee (including the appointment of a President)
- Director for the Promotion of Quality and/or Office for the Promotion of Quality.

These structures should have an organisation and schedules that allow them to cooperate with the Evaluation Team.

The Institution's primary objective during external evaluation is to provide the best possible support to the Evaluation Team in its work. Moreover, the Institution must provide the Team with a comfortable working environment, places in which they can discuss matters in private, and support their work in logistic and organizational terms (use of computers and printers, access to the library and offices, availability of material for consultation...).

► **The external evaluation visit**

⁴ AVEPRO, *Guidelines: nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality evaluation and promotion 2019*, Parts 1 § 2.

• *Preparatory phase*

The Institution and Team carry out different types of activities:

PREPARATORY phase	
INSTITUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ organizational activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact with all members of the Team: organization of travel and accommodation • agreement of the schedule for the visit with the President of the Team • preparation of necessary documents (e.g. reports on management, financial reports, doctoral theses, etc.) and any other material that the Evaluation Team deems useful for the purposes of evaluation • logistical organization of the visit • organization of the meetings scheduled during the visit • preparation of appropriate rooms in which the Team can meet and prepare the first draft of the Report ■ activities functional to the evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of the stakeholders that the Team will meet • preparation of a detailed schedule of meetings and encounters to be held during the visit
TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ organizational activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to the organization of the visit ■ activities functional to the evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of the SER and other documentation provided by the Institution • preparation of observations and comments regarding the documents analysed

Table 4 – Preparation of the site visit

It is important to underline that in this phase the Team and Institution need to **work directly together** and independently of AVEPRO, while the Agency naturally remains at their disposal should its help be required.

• *Execution phase*

The phase in which the visit takes place, i.e. when the Team physically goes to the Institution to be evaluated, is one of the most important moments in external evaluation. Indeed, not only do the Institution and the experts come together for the purpose of improving quality, but a dialogue takes place that will hopefully help build a relationship with the whole academic community belonging to the Holy See's Higher Education System.

The Team's physical presence allows it to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the effective situation in the Institution, analysing:

- the ways in which the Institution evaluates learning, teaching, research and the activities of support services, comparing them with national, European and international best practices



- the Institution's approach to management and maximisation of the results of Quality Assurance activities
- the context of relationships between the different categories of stakeholders both within and outside the Institution (e.g. Episcopal bodies, among teaching staff, between teaching staff and students, with service staff, etc.)
- the systematic involvement of all stakeholders in Quality Assurance during the internal evaluation of quality (self-evaluation) phase
- the level of dissemination of information (courses, study grants, results, follow-up activities deriving from Quality Assurance procedures)
- the role of support services in enhancing the quality of the education provided.

The Team visits the Institution for a set length of time (**between two and four days**, depending on the size of the Institution) and follows the schedule agreed upon by the president and the Institution during the preparatory phase.

During the visit, the Institution and Team carry out different types of activities:

EXECUTION phase	
INSTITUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ organizational activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organization of meetings as established in the schedule previously agreed upon with the Team • organization of access to facilities (e.g. lecture rooms, library, canteen, offices, etc.) • provision of any additional documentation (if required and/or necessary) • provision of comfortable places for the Team to work in ■ activities functional to the evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • response to requests from the Team • constructive and helpful communication with the Team
TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ activities functional to the evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings with all stakeholders: members of the governance, internal evaluation team, members of academic and service staff, students (from different years and study cycles), administrative managers, graduates, employers, Episcopal Bodies and representatives of all categories of users of the Institution's services (including representatives of external stakeholders) • observation of the general climate in which the Institution conducts its activities • visit of the structures in which the Institution's activities are conducted (e.g. lecture rooms, laboratories, offices, library, etc.).

Table 5 – Execution of the site visit

- *Final phase of the visit*

At the end of the visit the Team makes an oral presentation of the preliminary results of its visit: this includes conclusions and recommendations, which will be dealt with in more depth in the final version. This presentation, which has the purpose of providing immediate feedback after the visit, is already included in the schedule prior to the visit.

It is important to underline that **from the end of the visit no further contact regarding the evaluation process may take place between the Institution and members of the Team** (with the exception of contacts between the president of the Team and the Institution regarding delivery of the Report).

When the visit comes to its end, the phase of preparing the External Evaluation Report begins.

► The External Evaluation Report

The External Evaluation Report is the **end product of the whole external evaluation process**. This implies that the character and the quality of the Report depend on many factors which come into play throughout the whole Quality Assurance process.

Apart from being the end product, the External Evaluation Report is also the most visible result of the whole evaluation process, as it is published on the AVEPRO website. Due to its nature as a document with a very wide range of readers, not all of whom will be experts in Quality Assurance, the Evaluation Team is required to **use simple and direct language**, avoiding excessively technical terms, so that the sense and the complexity of the contents are easily understandable.

For the sake of simplicity and easy reading, the Report should be **written in Italian or English**. In particular cases in which this is not possible, and following specific agreements on the matter between AVEPRO and the Institution, the Report can also be written in another language.

• *Preparation and drafting of the Evaluation Report*

A good Evaluation Report is undoubtedly the result of careful planning on the part of the Evaluation Team.

The preparatory phase in drafting the Report begins when AVEPRO sends the Self-Evaluation Report/SER to the Team members for them to study.

From this moment onwards, the Team members should always focus on their end goal, i.e. the final Evaluation Report.

This means that the Team members should constantly be “keeping notes, making early drafts, checking evaluation against the facts, working towards the judgements.”⁵.

The Team should adhere to the **format provided by AVEPRO** when writing up the Report (this is sent to the Team members at the same time as the Self-Evaluation Report / SER, in both English and Italian) and focus on the following:

- **style** → simple, precise, clear, focused, friendly, cooperative
to be avoided: technical terms, clichés and ambiguity

⁵ ENQA, EQArep / *Transparency of European Higher Education Through Public Quality Assurance Reports - Final report of the project*, 2014, p. 51.

- **paragraphs** → clearly structured
- **sentences** → simple, clear, preferably short
to be avoided: overlapping of complicated sentences and sentences that are too long
- **tone** → neutral, measured, as objective as possible, critical in a friendly manner
- **contents** → minimum description, maximum analysis and evaluation
to be avoided: continual and excessive mentions of the process of Quality Assurance, too many unnecessary details
- **discussion** → based on concrete evidence
- **judgements and recommendations** → clearly stating the basis and order of priority
to be avoided: subjective comments based on team members' personal experience, speculation regarding possible future developments for the Institution.

The table below provides a list of activities involved in the preparation and writing up of the Evaluation Report. Please note that, as these are intended as guidelines, the list simply represents certain “best practices” which have been found effective in AVEPRO’s experience and are mentioned in the EQArep Final Report of the Project⁶.

Each Team is therefore expected to be familiar with these “best practices” and adapt them to its own effective needs.

BEST PRACTICES	
President	Thematic experts and Student rep.
► PRIOR to the visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study the SER independently: take notes – using the <i>SER analysis FORM 2019</i> • prepare a list of questions to check during the visit 	
► DURING the visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare own preliminary evaluations of the SER with other members of the Team and check whether they correspond to the situation in real life: take notes • prepare a draft text in which to include opinions, comments, suggestions – using the <i>format (for the Evaluation Report) provided by AVEPRO</i> 	
► AFTER the visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect the drafts of all members of the Team • prepare the final version of the Report and send it to the Team members • having agreed the Report with the Team members, send it to the Institution for review • correct any factual and/or typing errors indicated by the Institution • send the final version of the Report to AVEPRO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send the draft text including the whole Team’s opinions, comments, suggestions (using the format from AVEPRO) to the president • agree on the final version of the Report drawn up by the president

Table 6 – Best practices regarding the preparation and writing of the Evaluation Report

• **Contents of the Evaluation Report**

The contents of the Evaluation Report derive from the sum of various elements indicated

⁶ ENQA, EQArep /Transparency of European Higher Education Through Public Quality Assurance Reports - Final report of the project, 2014.

in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* and the ESG 2015⁷.

The Foreword of *Veritatis Gaudium* (3) defines four fundamental principles that impact the evaluation of quality in ecclesiastical academic Institutions:

- missionary identity and return to the Kerygma, i.e. to the essential Christian proclamation
- wide-ranging dialogue “not as a mere tactical approach” but as a “culture of encounter”
- interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches, i.e. seeking to overcome the separation of knowledge and science
- the need for “networking”, enhancing the positive and enriching contribution of peripheral entities.

Hence quality must be evaluated in relation to not only teaching but also research, the third mission and all the management and governance activities of ecclesiastical academic Institutions.

The ESG 2015 (Standard 2.6) expressly identify certain elements that must be included - concisely - in the External Evaluation Report:

- context description;
- description of the individual procedure, including experts involved;
- evidence, analysis and findings;
- conclusions;
- features of good practice demonstrated by the institution;
- recommendations for follow-up action.

Analysing these elements, seven areas of “key contents” for the External Evaluation Report can be identified:

- 1. Comments on/evaluation of the Self-Evaluation Report / SER**
- 2. Summary of the Institution’s vision, mission, governance and Strategic Plan**
- 3. Learning and research**
- 4. SWOT Analysis**
- 5. Quality Assurance / QA**
- 6. Third mission**
- 7. Recommendations**

More in-depth information on these areas of key contents is provided below. Please note that, unless otherwise specified (as in point 1 - Comments on/Evaluation of the SER), the contents under each point **refer to analysis of the situation in the Institution as a whole**, whether this is a single Faculty, a whole University or an Athenaeum.

➡ **1. Comments on/evaluation of the SER**

It is of utmost importance that the Evaluation Report makes clear reference to the SER - the document produced by the Institution during the self-evaluation phase - which

⁷ ENQA/ESU/EUA-EURASHE, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area/ESG*, 2015.



constitutes the main source of data and elements of use for the Team's evaluation. Reference to the SER facilitates understanding of the general state of the Institution and the context in which the Team has conducted its work, while also providing the Institution itself with an instrument of use in the subsequent phases of strategic planning, as part the process of Quality Assurance.

When analysing the SER the Team is required to use the **SER Analysis Form 2019⁸** prepared by AVEPRO.

This Analysis Form divides the SER into a detailed list of items regarding which a degree of "completion" must be indicated (i.e. the degree to which the items correspond to AVEPRO's requirements). Each item must be evaluated using the parameters provided (selecting one out of four possibilities⁹), thus rendering the completed Form a versatile quick-reference tool for the purposes of preparing the Evaluation Report.

It should be emphasised that the Analysis Form **is intended as a tool to help the Team** and should **NOT be copied and pasted into the Evaluation Report in its entirety** (not even as an annex).

As the SER is a confidential document for the exclusive use of the Institution and the Team (in contrast to the Evaluation Report, which is rendered public), the Team must **take particular care regarding the protection of confidential data contained in the SER**, which must not be included in a recognisable form within the Evaluation Report.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- **an analysis of the SER** produced by the Institution: carried out using the **SER Analysis Form 2019¹⁰** and taking into account all the parameters included in it
- **an evaluation of the degree of completion and clarity of presentation of the SER**, as well as an indication of its coherence (or lack of) with AVEPRO's requirements
- comments and observations
- **recommendations regarding both the SER itself and the coherence between what the document describes and the effective situation encountered during the visit.**

The above refers to analysis of the **SER of a single Faculty**. When the Team is called upon to evaluate an Institution with more than one Faculty (an Athenaeum or University), it has to evaluate both the SER of each individual Faculty (or Unit) and the general SER regarding the whole Institution.

➡ 2. Summary of the Institution's vision, mission, governance and Strategic Plan

The Evaluation Report must contain a summary of the current situation in the Institution

⁸ AVEPRO, *SER Analysis Form*, 2019.

⁹ Parameters used in the SER Analysis Form:

¹⁰ AVEPRO, *SER Analysis Form*, 2019.

as a whole, starting from the general principles of its particular philosophical and theological foundations.

The Team analyses the Institution's vision, mission and objectives before proceeding with an analysis of its Strategic Plan. The latter has a mainly internal operative value, but also represents a tool of communication via which the Institution can inform other parties about itself, its plans for the future and the strategic approaches it intends to follow along its path of development.

The Team then analyses the Institution's organization and governance: while much in these areas can be determined by internal statutes, rules and regulations, they also involve various types of problems, mainly related to the difficulties the Institution encounters when dealing with the (internal and external) challenges facing it.

In general terms, this summary should show which model the Institution applies and whether or not it possesses the means and potential to effectively achieve the development that it has set out to implement.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- a presentation of the **Faculty/Institution's current situation**
- an **analysis** of the Faculty/Institution's **vision, mission, objectives and Strategic Plan**
- the situation regarding **governance, management and sustainability**
- comments and observations regarding the **coherence between vision, mission, Strategic Plan and available means/instruments**
- recommendations.

It must be underlined again that **evaluation (both internal and external) and strategic planning are closely connected**: they are fundamental components within the whole process of Quality Assurance and should not be viewed as mere "bureaucracy", but rather as an opportunity for the academic community to create a "a university life open to greater participation, a desire felt by all those in any way involved in university life" (cit. *Sapientia Christiana*, Foreword V).

➡ 3. Learning and research

Learning and research are traditionally considered to be the fundamental missions of every Institution of higher education:

- learning, meaning the integral development of a person, focused on "**student-centred learning**"¹¹ and **learning outcomes**"¹²
- research, meaning both original investigations subsequently published through various means, and scholarship, or work (not necessarily published) that helps keep teaching staff up-to-date on all aspects of their disciplinary sector.

¹¹ Cit. ESG 2015: "student-centred learning and teaching".

¹² ENQA/ESU/EUA-EURASHE, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area/ESG*, 2015.

The profound changes of modern society render these two areas increasingly interconnected, as also underlined in *Veritatis Gaudium*, which states that it is “Indispensable in this regard is the establishment of new and qualified centres of research where – as I proposed in *Laudato Si’*¹³ – scholars from different religious universities and from different scientific fields can interact with responsible freedom and mutual transparency, [...] In all countries, **universities constitute the main centres of scientific research for the advancement of knowledge and of society; they play a decisive role in economic social and cultural development, especially in a time like our own, marked as it is by rapid, constant and far-reaching changes in the fields of science and technology.** International agreements also take account of the vital responsibility of universities for research policies and the need to coordinate them by creating networks of specialized centres in order to facilitate, not least, the mobility of researchers.” (cit. *Veritatis Gaudium*, Foreword, 5)¹⁴.

The Evaluation Report must therefore focus on the elements that characterise the core of the Institution’s work, i.e. learning and research, to verify whether or not its vision and mission are effectively being realized.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

a. Learning

- an indication of whether or not the Institution has a procedure to encourage a sense of independence among students, while at the same time ensuring that they receive guidance and support from teaching staff;
- a **summary of the programmes of study** available;
- the results of the **evaluation of teaching** e.g. teaching staff, modes of teaching, resources, etc. (see Annex 1 of the Guidelines on Strategic Planning 2019¹⁵ - Education, learning and teaching);
- the **learning outcomes** for students.

b. Research:

- a **summary of how research is organized** (strategies, resources and their distribution);
- a general **evaluation of the scientific production** of teaching staff, doctoral students and/or others;
- comments and observations;
- recommendations.

➡ 4. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is a core aspect of the whole evaluation process, during both the internal (self-evaluation) and external phases. It constitutes an analysis, usually very in-depth and precise, that fosters full understanding of what effectively characterises the

¹³ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* (24 May 2015).

¹⁴ AVEPRO, *Guidelines: nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality Evaluation*, 2019.

¹⁵ AVEPRO, *Guidelines on Strategic Planning*, 2019, Annex 1 (Education, learning and teaching).

Institution at the time of evaluation (both positively and negatively) and provides a basis for subsequent promotion (and the Strategic Plan in particular).

During the phase of internal evaluation (self-evaluation), the Institution carries out a SWOT analysis regarding itself, and includes the results in its Self-Evaluation Report / SER.

During the **phase of external evaluation, the Team analyses this SWOT analysis**, consequently being able to:

- confirm or deny the contents of the Self-Evaluation Report / SER
- change the values regarding one or more aspects included in the Self-Evaluation Report / SER: aspects perceived as negative/positive by the Institution may be seen as positive/negative by the Evaluation Team (“from – to +” or “from + to –”)
- understand what kind of perception the Institution has of itself and to what extent this impacts its effective situation and activities.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- a clear **summary of the Faculty/Institution’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**;
- comments and observations;
- recommendations.

➡ 5. Quality Assurance / QA

This section of the Evaluation Report must include the Team’s remarks regarding the Institution’s policies and actions aimed at the establishment of a functional and efficient system of Quality Assurance. The latter should be capable of bringing the Institution increasingly closer to fully achieving its own objectives, also in the light of *Veritatis Gaudium*¹⁶ and the ESG 2015¹⁷.

Standard 1.1 of the ESG 2015 highlights that the Quality Assurance policy should be translated into practice through a numerous series of **processes, involving the various stakeholders both external and internal to the Institution (which is responsible for their implementation, monitoring and review)**. The Team’s task is to analyse these processes and verify whether:

- the stakeholders have been involved and there has been a process of constructive discussion (inclusion);
- the creation of processes and structures was the result of teamwork;
- the Institution has ways of constantly comparing and monitoring the situation.

The Team is also required to evaluate whether the results of the process of Quality Assurance have been used for the purposes of strategic planning, and whether or not this has produced verifiable results. Both the Institution’s Quality Improvement Plan / QIP and its Strategic Plan / SP should be seen and interpreted within the context of the Quality

¹⁶ AVEPRO, *Guidelines: nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality Evaluation 2019*.

¹⁷ ENQA/ESU/EUA-EURASHE, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area/ESG*, 2015.

Assurance process as a whole.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- a presentation of the **general system of Quality Assurance in the area in which** the Institution operates
- a presentation of the **system of Quality Assurance within the Institution** (regarding teaching, research, governance, and decision-making processes)
- a description of the **process via which the Institution has developed its Quality Assurance policies**
- a list of **members of the Quality Committee**
- a description of the **methodology used to collect the data required for the evaluation process**: instruments employed (questionnaires, focus groups, meetings) and allocation of tasks for data collection
- the **effective involvement of students and all other staff** (teaching and non-teaching);
- **how the Institution defines its Quality Assurance policies**
- a description of **policies and methods for the implementation of the Quality Assurance process**
- a description of how the **Quality Assurance process is managed**
- the **use made of the results obtained and their translation into strategic planning**: the Institution's Quality Improvement Plan / QIP and Strategic Plan / SP
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

➡ 6. Third mission

The third mission is internationally fully recognised as a fundamental mission of higher education Institutions, alongside the more traditional ones of learning and research.

The third mission implies that Institutions must have the basic aim of a **dialogue with society** in order to foster a higher level of general wellbeing within their cultural, social and educational context, as well as the development of civil awareness. Institutions are therefore part of a network of external relations with the purpose of introducing young people to the world of work, as well as fostering their growth as conscious and competent citizens in an increasingly complex and globalised society. Through the third mission Institutions come into direct contact with different people and groups than they traditionally would and open themselves up to a multitude of forms of interaction, depending on the context in which they operate.

For ecclesiastical Institutions the third mission takes on an even more important role, as it is closely connected to the “missionary transformation of a **Church that «goes forth»**”¹⁸, entering into dialogue with a society characterised by increasingly complex dynamics, as highlighted in the Foreword to *Veritatis gaudium*: “**we are not living an epoch of change so**

18 Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, 3.

much as an epochal change¹⁹, marked by a general «social and environmental»²⁰ and «human crisis»²¹, in which each day we can see more «signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises»²². There is, without doubt, «a need to change “models of global development”» and «redefin[e] our notion of progress»²³: «The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths»²⁴. From the point of view of academic education and scientific investigation, this mammoth and urgent task demands a significant and common commitment to a radical change of paradigm or - it could be said - «a bold cultural revolution»²⁵.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- a **description of the Institution’s position in relation to its context**
- a **summary of its network of external relations** for the purpose of dialogue with society, **both locally and further afield**
- a **summary of its network of external relations** for the purpose of **fostering students’ personal growth**
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

➡ 7. Recommendations

For each of the areas of contents indicated above (points 1 to 6 of this section) the Evaluation Team is required to make recommendations. This means that it makes recommendations in each of its particular areas of competence.

As can be seen from the model Evaluation Report provided at the end of this document, it is especially helpful if the Team **both includes the recommendations within the relevant section of the Report and gathers them together in a dedicated section** just before the conclusions.

This system renders the Team’s work more effective from several viewpoints:

- each individual recommendation is clearly contextualised, as it is included in the specific section to which it refers – see **points 1 to 6 of the model Evaluation Report** provided at the end of this document
- the recommendations can also be presented in the **order of priority** that the Team deems would be most effective, thus highlighting the most problematic or urgent

19 FRANCIS, *Address to the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church*, Florence, 10 November 2015.

20 Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*, 139.

21 Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 55.

22 Cf. *Laudato Si’*, 61

23 *Ibid.*, 194

24 *Ibid.*, 53; cf. n. 105.

25 *Ibid.*, 114.



elements, in order to provide practical suggestions and therefore support the Institution in its strategic planning – see **point 7 of the model Evaluation Report** provided at the end of this document.

In accordance with the educational nature of the whole Quality Assurance process adopted by AVEPRO, the Team must take particular care when making recommendations and express them in such a way that they will constitute an effective aid for the Institution (within the limits of the Team's competences and abilities).

The language used for making recommendations should therefore be “positive” and seek to encourage improvement in a constructive manner.

Specifically, the Evaluation Report should contain:

- **a list of all recommendations made in the previous points of the Report LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY**
 - comments and observations regarding the order of priority
 - recommendations.
- ***Procedure for review of the Evaluation Report and appeals***

Once the Evaluation Report is ready, the Institution is given an opportunity to view it before its delivery to AVEPRO.

According to the procedure for review of the Report, the president of the Team sends the final version of the Report to the Institution, which has **two weeks' time** in which to respond: if no response is provided within this time, the Institution is considered to have given its tacit consent.

If the Institution finds **any factual errors and/or typing mistakes**, the procedure is simple: the Institution sends a formal reply to the president of the Evaluation Team, specifying the errors identified; the latter checks the errors and makes any necessary corrections before sending the text to AVEPRO, together with the Institution's response. It should be pointed out that this procedure refers exclusively to factual errors and typing mistakes (and therefore not evaluations or matters of opinion).

Should the Institution find what it deems are **serious and grounded reasons for a revision of the Report**, it can appeal directly to AVEPRO.

The Institution must send a formal request for the publication of the Report to be postponed, stating the reason for its appeal in detail.

Once AVEPRO has received such formal request, it postpones publication of the Report and submits the question to the Agency's Scientific Council, which has two options:

- it can accept the appeal and suggest possible solutions to resolve the issue (e.g. the appointment of a new Evaluation Team, or the rewriting of all or part of the Report)
- it can reject the appeal if it deems that the objections made were unfounded/groundless.

It should also be mentioned here that Evaluation Reports do not involve formal decision-making, such as the accreditation of an Institution, which is the exclusive competence of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

- ***Delivery of the Evaluation Report to the authorities and publication***



The president of the Evaluation Team sends the final version of the External Evaluation Report to AVEPRO within 8 weeks from completion of the site visit (see also “**Table 2 – Timeline of external evaluation**” at the beginning of this document).

Within 2 weeks of its receipt (and therefore 10 weeks after completion of the visit) AVEPRO renders the Report public via:

- **delivery** to the Congregation for Catholic Education / CCE, the Grand Chancellor and any other academic authorities (Dean, Head, Rector)
- **publication** on AVEPRO’s website.

When applicable, any factual corrections or “responses” to the Report, if properly grounded or considered appropriate by AVEPRO, are annexed to the Report when it is sent to the authorities and published on the website.

➤ External Evaluation Report MODEL

In order to facilitate the reading of and comparison between Evaluation Reports regarding ecclesiastical Institutions, **the structure of the model provided below should be adhered to in all External Evaluation Reports:**

➤ Index

➤ Introduction

- **general information regarding the status of the Faculty/Institution**
- **general information regarding the visit carried out:** date, place, composition of the External Evaluation Team, brief schedule for the visit (possibly included as an annex at the end of the document)

➤ 1. Self-Evaluation Report / SER

- provide **an analysis of the SER** produced by the Institution, carried out using the *SER Analysis Form 2019*²⁶ and taking into account all the parameters it contains:
 - List of members of the Quality Committee
 - Methods used to collect the data required for compilation of the SER: instruments employed (questionnaires, focus groups) and allocation of tasks for the collection of data
 - Effective involvement of students and all staff (teaching and non-teaching)
 - The Institution's vision, mission and objectives
 - SWOT analysis and updated Strategic Plan
 - Quality Assurance policies
 - General overview regarding programmes: education, multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches
 - Strategies and modes of learning and the centrality of students
 - Support and services for students
 - Learning and teaching (definition of study plans, their monitoring and review, appreciation of teaching staff)
 - Research and scholarship, support for the creation of research centres
 - Ability to create networks
 - Contributions to the outside world/third mission activities
 - Policies for internationalization
 - Publicity and information management
 - Policies and modes of governance, and management of resources available (structures, staff, economic and financial resources)
 - Annexes (1-11)

²⁶ AVEPRO, *SER Analysis Form*, 2019.



- provide an **evaluation of the completeness and clarity of the SER**, as well as its coherence (or lack thereof) with AVEPRO's instructions
- comments and observations
- recommendations **regarding both the SER and the coherence between the document and the effective situation observed during the visit.**

➤ **2. Vision, Mission, Governance and Strategic Plan**

- describe the **effective current situation in the Faculty/Institution**
- provide an **analysis of the Faculty/Institution's vision, mission, objectives and Strategic Plan**
- describe the situation regarding **governance, management and sustainability**
- comments and observations regarding **the coherence between vision, mission, Strategic Plan and available means/instruments**
- recommendations.

➤ **3. Learning and Research**

a. learning

- state whether or not the Institution has a procedure to encourage a sense of independence among students, while at the same time ensuring that they receive guidance and support from teaching staff
- provide a **summary of the courses available**
- give the results of the **evaluation conducted regarding teaching**, e.g. teaching staff, modes of teaching, resources, etc. (see Annex 1 of the Guidelines on Strategic Planning 2019²⁷ -Education, learning and teaching)
- list the students' **learning outcomes**

b. research:

- provide a **summary of how research is organized** (strategies, resources and their distribution)
- provide a general **evaluation of scientific production** by teaching staff, doctoral students and/or others
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

➤ **4. SWOT analysis**

- **clearly summarise the Faculty/Institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

²⁷ AVEPRO, *Guidelines on Strategic Planning*, Annex 1 (Education, learning and teaching), 2019.



➤ **5. Quality Assurance / QA**

- describe the **general system of Quality Assurance in the area in which** the Institution operates
- describe the **system of Quality Assurance within the Institution** (regarding teaching, research, governance, and decision-making processes)
- describe the **PROCESS via which the Institution has developed its Quality Assurance policies**
- state whether the **RESULTS obtained have been used to define strategic planning**
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

➤ **6. Third mission**

- **describe the Institution's position in relation to its context**
- provide a **summary of its network of external relations** for the purpose of dialogue with society, **both locally and further afield**
- **summarise its network of external relations** for the purpose of **fostering students' personal growth**
- comments and observations
- recommendations.

➤ **7. Conclusions and presentation of recommendations in order of priority**

- provide conclusions regarding all of the work carried out
- draw up a **list of recommendations provided in the previous points of the Report IN ORDER OF PRIORITY**
- comments and observations regarding the order of priority.

