

## SET UP WORKING GROUPS IN THE FRAME OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

### *Introduction and review of progress to date*

The evaluation Report of ENQA panel and the awareness of the increasing tasks of the Agency have suggested to ask to the Scientific Council to generously increase its commitment in support of the Agency. During the online meetings of July and October 2020, a series of options have been analyzed. The following table summarizes the findings that emerged in the follow up procedure of the above mentioned meetings. For the record, the original stated preferences for group work of SC members was as follows.

COMPETENCES & WORKING GROUPS	MEMBERS
WG 1: Review, systematise and upgrade existing Generic Guidelines	Peter JONKERS John DAVIES <sup>1</sup>
WG 2: Technical Committee to review current protocols and operational aspects of reporting (SAR and EE)	Peter JONKERS John DAVIES <sup>4</sup>
WG 3: Development of new Guidelines for HEIs on QA, Research, International Strategy and Partnerships, etc.	Peter JONKERS Fiona HUNTER Salvatore LOIERO <sup>2</sup> John DAVIES <sup>2</sup>
WG 4: AVEPRO Policy and Processes on Appeals and Complaints	Slawomir NOWOSAD
WG 5: AVEPRO's Framework on the Church's teachings as reflected in the life and work of Ecclesiastical HEI	Gabino URÍBARRI BILBAO Mauro MANTOVANI Salvatore LOIERO <sup>1</sup> Dinh Anh Nhue NGUYEN
WG 6: Overview of AVEPRO training provision, with partners, for HEIs and others.	Isabel CAPELOA GIL Fiona HUNTER John DAVIES <sup>3</sup>

However, in order to maximize and organize the support of the SC, some additional factors (given for granted “the contents” of the WGs) have to be considered such as:

- the “number” of the WGs it is feasible to activate in 2021
- the organisation of the WGs (composition and operational activities)
- the linkage with the Secretariat of the Agency
- expected outputs and timelines
- the alignment of the WG's activities with AVEPRO's Strategic Plan

These elements, among others, are the key features of the following proposal.

### *Definition of the key areas of focus of the SC Working groups*

It seems to be possible to define a “priority list” of the themes that the WGs should work on in 2021. Not all the suggested topics will be faced during the first year of activity, nor should they be realized in a simultaneous way. A first proposal concerning the topics, therefore, is the following:

Theme of WG	Specific topics to be tackled
<p>WG 1: Guidelines and Briefing notes</p> <p>(Former WG 1 and 3)</p>	<p>The Group will deliver both updated Guidelines for the Evaluation of Quality and specific Briefing Notes aimed at fostering the “Promotion of Quality”. These latter would include e.g. the development of new documents on Research, International Strategy and Partnerships, Resilience, HE challenges in a post-Covid world, Distance Learning, etc.</p> <p><u>The priority for 2021</u> is to start with the “Quality Promotion” guidelines since the Institutional Evaluation that we offer is under stress due to the pandemic. To deliver new Guidelines now could cause confusion and ambiguity. However, this process could certainly start in 2021.</p>
<p>WG 2: Reporting and Training of Experts</p> <p>(Former WG 2 and 6)</p>	<p>The External Evaluation reports are the most visible activity of the Agency. The drafting of these reports is a task of the Evaluation Commission. The WG will offer documents, suggestions and observation in relation to the reports with a two faceted approach. On the one hand, it will point out elements related to single reports in order to improve their quality. This process, on the other hand, will contribute in highlighting possible lack of competences of AVEPRO’s experts that could require specific training programs.</p> <p>It has to be considered that the SP has frequent references to training other parties also. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff in the HEI on the genesis and drafting of SAR</li> <li>• chancellors and bishops’ conferences as part of the Q promotion priority.</li> </ul> <p>Given the limited number of recent reports (due to the pandemic), <u>the priority for 2021</u> should be to start with an analysis of the required competences asked of our experts and to define a training scheme that could be integrated with the main findings of the “Porticus Project”. If appropriate a review of the standard of previous reports could take place.</p>
<p>WG 3: Church’s teachings as reflected in the life and work of Ecclesiastical HEIs</p> <p>(Former WG 5)</p>	<p>The main activity of this Group should be the definition of “position papers” and possibly “recommended actions” aimed at bridging the teaching of the Church with the inspiring challenges listed (mostly) in the foreword of <i>Veritatis gaudium</i>.</p> <p><u>The priority for 2021</u> is to identify and work on a couple of topics that should be discussed and analyzed. The findings of this action will be delivered to the Academic community as position papers aiming at stimulating a wider and deeper discussion.</p>
	<p>It seems to be appropriate to split the theme proposed for WP 4 in two distinct sections:</p>

WG 4: AVEPRO's Policies and Processes on Appeals and Complaints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The proposal of a policy (or policies) and of a procedure (or procedures) for appeals and complaints will be revised and proposed by the Secretariat of the Agency to the SC</li> <li>2) It is extremely probable that a commission (or WG) of the SC members will need to be set up to act the body that will scrutinize appeals and complaints. However, it is suggested to postpone to 2022 the instigation of this activity.</li> </ol>
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Since the activities of the WG for 2021 seem to be quite relevant, it is necessary to propose the outputs that will be delivered by the end of 2021 and to reconsider, if appropriate and useful, to start in 2022 the activities foreseen for example for the former WGs 4 and 6.

### ***Proposed composition of the WGs***

The suggested composition of the groups is indicated in the following table. Members of the SC not listed here are free to express their preference, so that their names could be added.

<b>Theme of WG</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
WG 1: Guidelines  (Former WG 1 and 3)	John DAVIES - Peter JONKERS - Fiona HUNTER - Salvatore LOIERO - Slawomir NOWOSAD
WG 2: Reporting and Training of Experts  (Former WG 2 and 6)	Peter JONKERS - John DAVIES - Fiona HUNTER - Isabel CAPELOA GIL - Caty DUYKAERTS
WG 3: Church's teachings as reflected in the life and work of Ecclesiastical HEI  (Former WG 5)	Gabino URÍBARRI BILBAO - Mauro MANTOVANI - Salvatore LOIERO - Dinh Anh Nhue NGUYEN

### ***Organization of the SC Working groups***

Each group is expected to generate a spirit of collaboration and support. It will be coordinated by a "convener /rapporteur" whose main tasks will be:

- to guarantee a stable linkage with the Agency
- to define and realize an operational plan of the activities
- to organize the meetings
- to ensure that the group has good preparatory documents to work at which may be drafted by the rapporteur or a group member
- to present the drafts of the documents that the group will consider
- to ensure that the group delivers its outputs to the SC on time

The proposed convener/ rapporteurs are:

WG 1 John DAVIES

WG 2 Fiona HUNTER

WG 3 Gabino URÍBARRI BILBAO

Each WG will be supported by the Agency, in particular the Director will be the liaison person between group 1 and 3 and the Agency; the group 2 will be supported by the President. The goal of the groups is to provide documents that will be discussed during the next appropriate meetings of the SC.

### ***Expected outputs***

#### **WG 1: GUIDELINES and briefing notes**

**OUTPUT 1** will be a considered revision of the Evaluation Guidelines in the light of new circumstances which have emerged since their original design. These include, *inter alia*:

- the recommendations in the recent ENQA review, to which AVEPRO will be expected to respond in due course, and take aboard as appropriate.
- the advent of COVID and its consequences for Quality
- the recent experiences generated by AVEPRO projects in specific settings in Europe

It is envisaged that the WG will commence its thinking on the above, but will not produce a definitive version by the end of 2021, as these will still be in progress. A Progress Report will be expected on WG thinking to date, by December 2021. These Guidelines will be completed in 2022 for presentation to and approval of the SC, at a date to be agreed. The audience will be all AVEPRO's stakeholders.

**OUTPUTs 2** will deal with Briefing notes relating to Quality Promotion. In the SP, reference was made to various domains in which new guidelines or position statements would be highly desirable, including Research, and Research Degrees: Sustainability and Resilience especially in a post COVID setting, International Strategy, Partnership and Operations and Remote/Online learning.

These are all inter related, but their production will be sequenced thus in terms of outputs of the Group in 2021. The prime audience will be the HEI, but these will also be utilized as appropriate by External Evaluation teams.

- the production of a broad template of framework which will act as a guide for the design of the individual briefing notes, to ensure consistency as needed, notionally by mid May 2021
- the production of briefing notes on Research. Research is not covered by ESG, but is clearly a major function of HEI together with Scholarship and should figure in any discussion or evaluation of the Quality of HEI operations and strategy. It is an area identified by Pope Francis as being of huge importance in *Veritatis gaudium*. It will be a bridge to discussions in WG 3 on the Church's teachings.
- QA of the Doctorate and Research Degrees may be subsumed in the document on Research, but it may warrant a separate document, also given its importance in Bologna discussions
- the production of a briefing note on Institutional Resilience and Sustainability: this would assist HEI a very turbulent environment generally, but post COVID specifically, and is clearly related to the concept of institutional quality. It is envisaged this would address

different scenarios and suggest different approaches, building on discussions and presentations already made to the SC.

It is open to the group to indicate realistic deadlines for the production of some of these during 2021, with a view to the presentation of the whole to SC by December 2021.

The remaining possibilities for Briefing Notes can be picked up in following years of the SP.

## **WG 2: REPORTING AND TRAINING OF EXPERTS**

As far as the needs of the external evaluative teams are concerned, it is expected that WG 2 will produce the following outputs. It is recommended that the following sequence be adopted, as the provision of a training programme must depend on the prior existence of clear and unambiguous documentation on an agreed process of conducting the visits and developing the EE Report. The training programme is a means of disseminating these to the pool of existing and new team members.

**OUTPUT 1** will consist of Briefing Notes and supporting documents relating to the Effectiveness of Team Visits and Reporting. Since the quality of these Reports is very much dependent on the systematic way in which the team organises itself to collect evidence, and how effectively it assesses, dissects, interprets and classifies this evidence, these dimensions will be part of the Briefing, as well as good practice in writing analytical and robust report. This Briefing will also be of great value to the proposed new Technical Commission of AVEPRO which will be set up to monitor the quality of EE Reports.

**OUTPUT 2** will consist of an analysis of the competencies and skills needed by the evaluation teams to do their job effectively. The analysis will draw on the perspectives generated by the above Briefing Notes, the evidence from existing reports and that of international good practice. All this will be available as material for incorporation into the online/face to face training being considered as part of the so- called Porticus project.

It is expected that both these outputs will be delivered by the end of 2021. The audience for and main users of these outputs will be the EE teams and the Technical Commission. "

## **WG 3: THE CHURCH'S TEACHINGS AS REFLECTED IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF ECCLESIASTICAL HEIs**

The evolving Magisterium of the Church has a great significance for Ecclesiastical HEI and therefore AVEPRO. Documents such as *Veritatis Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* constitute challenges for HEI in keeping up to date, and being able to understand the full significance, for their work and way of life.

The audience for these outcomes is primarily the HEI, though will also be useful for external evaluation teams. The outcomes of this group will be:

- an analysis of the scope of relevant documentation, and a plan of topics to be analysed.
- the production of a series of Position Statements; Briefings or Discussion Papers which will aim to link the teaching of the Church with the defined topics above, and indicate relevant actions for HEI to consider adopting internally in terms of academic and research policies and practice, and external engagement with stakeholders.

It is not conceived that the activation of these by HEI would be in any way assessed in Quality reviews, but would influence the mission, strategy and operations of HEI, as part of external understanding of the dynamics of the particular HEI.

The group would set its own timescales for the production of these documents once the scope of the overall activity is agreed.

#### WG4: AVEPRO's Policies and Processes on Appeals and Complaints

The activities of this WG and therefore its outputs will be postponed.

#### ***Conclusion***

The Scientific Council is invited to endorse these proposals so that the WGs may commence their activities as soon as possible to meet the targets indicated in the Strategic Plan.