

NORMS FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND CONDUCT OF THE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT TEAMS (Version 2.1)

1. Selection and appointment of the External Assessment Teams

The assessment carried out by A3ES is performed by an External Assessment Team (EAT) composed of independent experts.

In accordance with Article 11 of Regulation No. 392/2013, each EAT is comprised of three to five elements, depending on the complexity and type of the assessment to be carried out. It includes a President, a student, an international expert, and a national expert selected among recognised experts in the academic/scientific/professional field being assessed.

EATs intended to assess New Study Programmes (NCE) may not include, at this stage, a student member.

The President and the other members of the EAT are appointed by the Management Board of A3ES, following a proposal by the Project Coordinator from the pool of experts.

The selection of the EAT members is based on the following requirements:

- The nominee's profile and CV must suit the functions to be performed.
- Nominees must be independent of the institution and study programme under assessment.
- Each EAT must be gender balanced and its members must be from different geographies and institutions than those being assessed, without prejudice, however, to the previous requirements.
- EAT members should have continuous experience in the four areas that the higher education teaching careers encompass: teaching, research, management and community relations. Emphasis should be given to the experience accumulated by potential evaluators in academic management.

The integration of experts in the EAT should be preceded by a training session, organized according to the possibilities of the moment (face-to-face or online). In the case of face-to-face sessions, they should be organized covering the various geographical origins of the members as much as possible.

The selection of students should start with an open call, promoted within higher education institutions (HEI) and academic associations, aimed at identifying possible candidates who, voluntarily, wish to join the External Assessment Teams. The final

selection should first be based on documentation, followed by a written test focusing on aspects of the quality assessment processes of the study programmes and HEI. The integration of students in the EATs should ensure an adequate match between the scientific area of the study programmes under assessment and the student's formative path.

According to paragraph 3 of article 11 of Regulation No. 392/2013, the procedure for the appointment of the EAT members for a given study programme is carried out by the Management Board, as follows:

1. The Management Board nominates the EAT President. And, after hearing the President and bearing in mind the project coordinator's proposals, the Board nominates the remaining elements that will integrate the EAT.
1. The President of the EAT should, whenever possible, be in the upper echelons of their teaching career (Full Professor, Principal Coordinator Professor, Associate Professor with Aggregation or Coordinator Professor).

A3ES may form Thematic Evaluation Committees (TEC) to advise the Management Board whenever possible, namely in the assessment cycles of scientific fields covering a large number of study programmes in operation.

The composition of the various EATs should be made public on the Agency's website.

2. Conflict of interest and norms of conduct

According to article 12 of Regulation No. 392/2013, the appointment and operation of the EAT must comply with the following principles of no-conflict-of-interest, guaranteeing impartiality, unbiased opinion, confidentiality, and adequate personal conduct:

1. EAT members must not have had any paid or contractual relationship with the HEI in the two years prior to its assessment.
2. EAT members should keep an adequate distance from the HEI under assessment to guarantee the independence, unbiased opinion, and impartiality of the assessment process. Simultaneously, they must adopt a constructive attitude towards the HEI, so that this process can be carried out with the confidence and openness that provide a real opportunity to improve the functioning of the HEI.
3. When conducting the assessment process, evaluators should face the HEI and its collaborators as responsible partners and thus promote their openness and

commitment, without seeking to impose models from other study programmes/HEIs that harm the diversity of the solutions adopted.

4. Namely, it is strictly forbidden for evaluators to use study programmes in which they collaborate or their HEI as examples of models to be followed by those under assessment.
5. Any interested HEI may incidentally raise the non-compliance with the abovementioned incompatibilities and duties.
6. The members of the EAT should always seek to discuss with A3ES any situations that may constitute a conflict of interest.
7. The members of the EAT shall safeguard the confidentiality of information on the assessment process, in particular, that of documents which are not made public.
8. The members of the EAT shall not remain evaluators of A3ES for more than three consecutive years.

In pursuit of their activity, the conduct of EAT members should comply with A3ES' Code of Ethics, namely with the following principles:

- Accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness employing the most appropriate procedures, adjusted to the decision-making processes.
- Independence, impartiality, fairness, integrity, and objectivity.
- Good faith, considering the fundamental values of fairness considering the situations at stake.
- Clarity of purpose and action and an attitude of openness and transparency.
- Concern with ensuring and improving the quality of higher education and for safeguarding the public interest.

Approved in the Management Board's meeting of March 3rd, 2021.