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# Quality Assurance in the Italian higher education system

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# Presentation Agenda

1. **The national framework:** autonomy, evaluation, QA agency
2. **External QA in Italy:** the AVA system
3. **Internal QA and Self-assessment:** activities and key players
4. **Tools for QA:** the databases
5. **SWOT analysis**

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# Higher education autonomy in Italy

- Article 33, c. 6 of the Italian Constitution

*«Higher education institutions have the right to give themselves autonomous regulations within the limits established by the laws of the state.»*

- Law n. 168/89, Article 6

*1. Universities are endowed with legal personality and, according to article 33 of the Constitution, have didactic, scientific, organizational, financial and accounting autonomy; they define autonomously their own statutes and regulations.*

*2. In compliance with the principles of autonomy established by the Constitution and specified by law, higher education Institutions are governed, in addition to their own statutes and regulations, exclusively by legislative norms that operate expressly referring to them...»*

# Higher education autonomy in Italy

## Financial issues

- Law n. 537/93, art. 5 «1. *Starting from (the financial) year 1994, the public funding to Universities are defined in three distinct chapters of the estimate funding of the Ministry of University and Scientific and Technological Research, called:*
  - a) ordinary fund for universities (...),*
  - b) fund for universities' structures/buildings and large scientific equipment(...),*
  - c) fund for the planning of the development of the university system(...)*»

## Implementation of the National Qualification Framework (following the Bologna Process)

- Ministerial Decree n.509/1999
- Ministerial Decree n.270/2004

# The evaluation system for Universities

- Law n.537/1993, art. 5

*«22. Nelle università, ove già non esistano, sono istituiti nuclei di valutazione interna con il compito di verificare, mediante analisi comparative dei costi e dei rendimenti, la corretta gestione delle risorse pubbliche, la produttività della ricerca e della didattica, nonché l'imparzialità ed il buon andamento dell'azione amministrativa(...)*

*23. La relazione dei nuclei di valutazione interna è trasmessa al Ministero (...) per la valutazione dei risultati relativi all'efficienza e alla produttività delle attività di ricerca e di formazione, e per la verifica dei programmi di sviluppo e di riequilibrio del sistema universitario, anche ai fini della successiva assegnazione delle risorse. Tale valutazione è effettuata dall'osservatorio permanente da istituire, con decreto del Ministro, ai sensi dell'articolo 12, comma 4, lettera f), della legge 9 maggio 1989, n. 168, previo parere delle competenti Commissioni parlamentari.»*
- DM 22 February 96 – establishment of the *Osservatorio per la valutazione del sistema universitario*
- Law n. 370/99 – establishment of the *Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario (CNVSU)*
- Law n. 286/2006 art.2, c. 138 – establishment of ANVUR
- Presidential Decree n.76/2010 - Regulation concerning the structure and functioning of ANVUR as an independent Agency

# The Italian QA Agency - ANVUR

The National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) is an Italian independent public body which oversees the national higher education system and has the primary objective to enhance its overall quality.

The Agency's evaluations span the full range of activities of the Universities: teaching & learning, research, third mission. In this context, the challenge in future years is make all the information that ANVUR obtains pursuing these activities to bear on the accreditation processes

# ANVUR's main tasks

- Accreditation of Institutions and study programmes (External Quality Assurance of teaching & learning, research and Third Mission activities);
- Quality of research products national assessment (VQR)
- Administrative performance assessment
- Management of specific national programmes
- Definition and calculation of criteria to access the university national recruitment system (ASN)
- Guidelines for stakeholders

*UNIVERSITY SYSTEM*



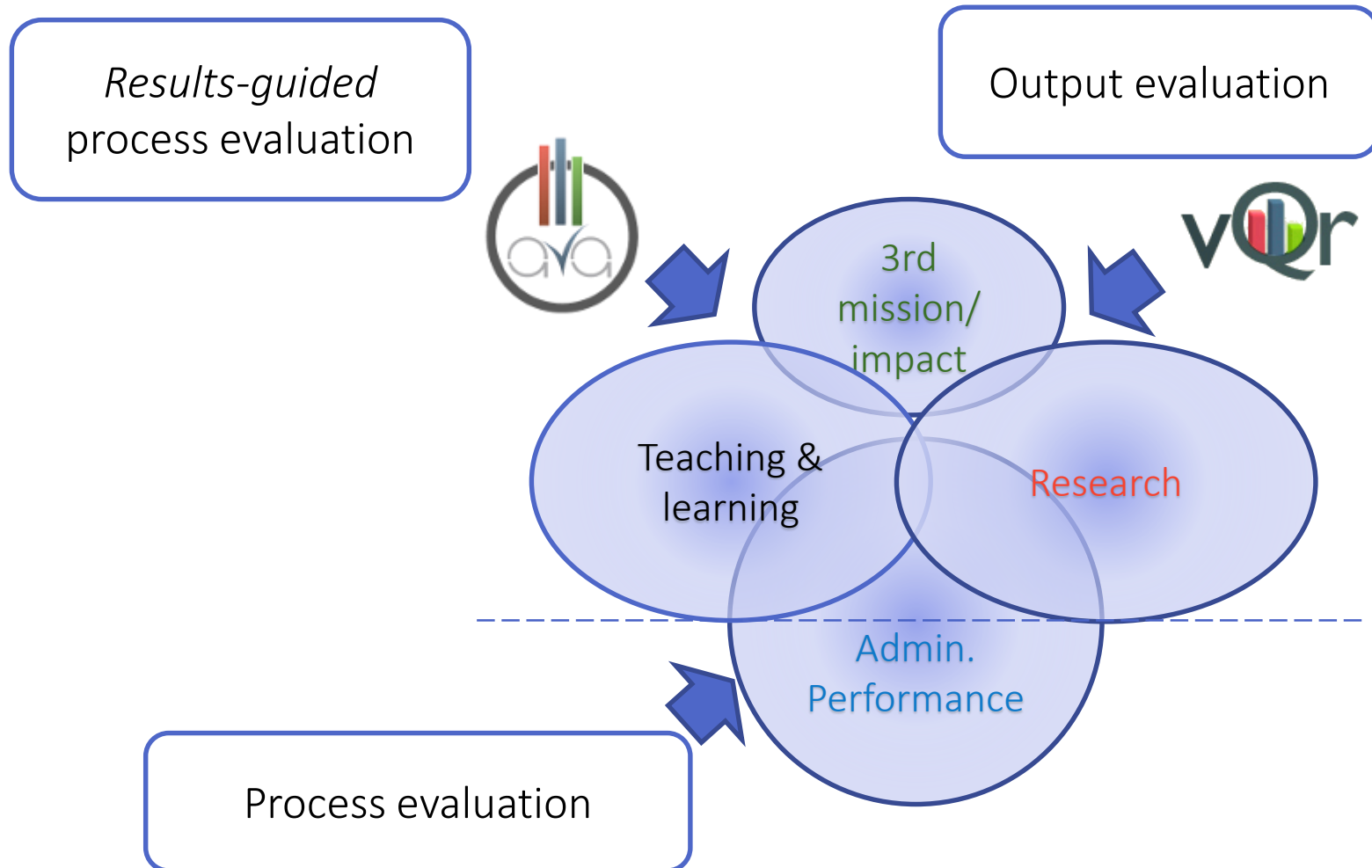
- Accreditation of:
- new programmes ISCED 6 (non state institutions);
- new programmes ISCED 7 (all institutions);
- new (private) institutions.

*HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN ART, MUSIC AND  
DANCE*





# ANVUR can evaluate HEIs with an integrated approach



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# External QA in the Italian higher education system – the AVA system

Following the legislation, the Agency has developed its own assessment criteria, methodologies and procedures to fulfil its tasks, in strict adherence to ESG.

The external QA system is called AVA (Autovalutazione, Valutazione periodica, Accredитamento - Self-assessment, Periodic Evaluation, Accreditation) and is operational since 2013.

AVA provides for the self-assessment by programmes and institutions, concerning their internal procedures and the outcomes of their activities, and an external assessment of the quality assurance systems by ANVUR, based on site visits and document analysis.

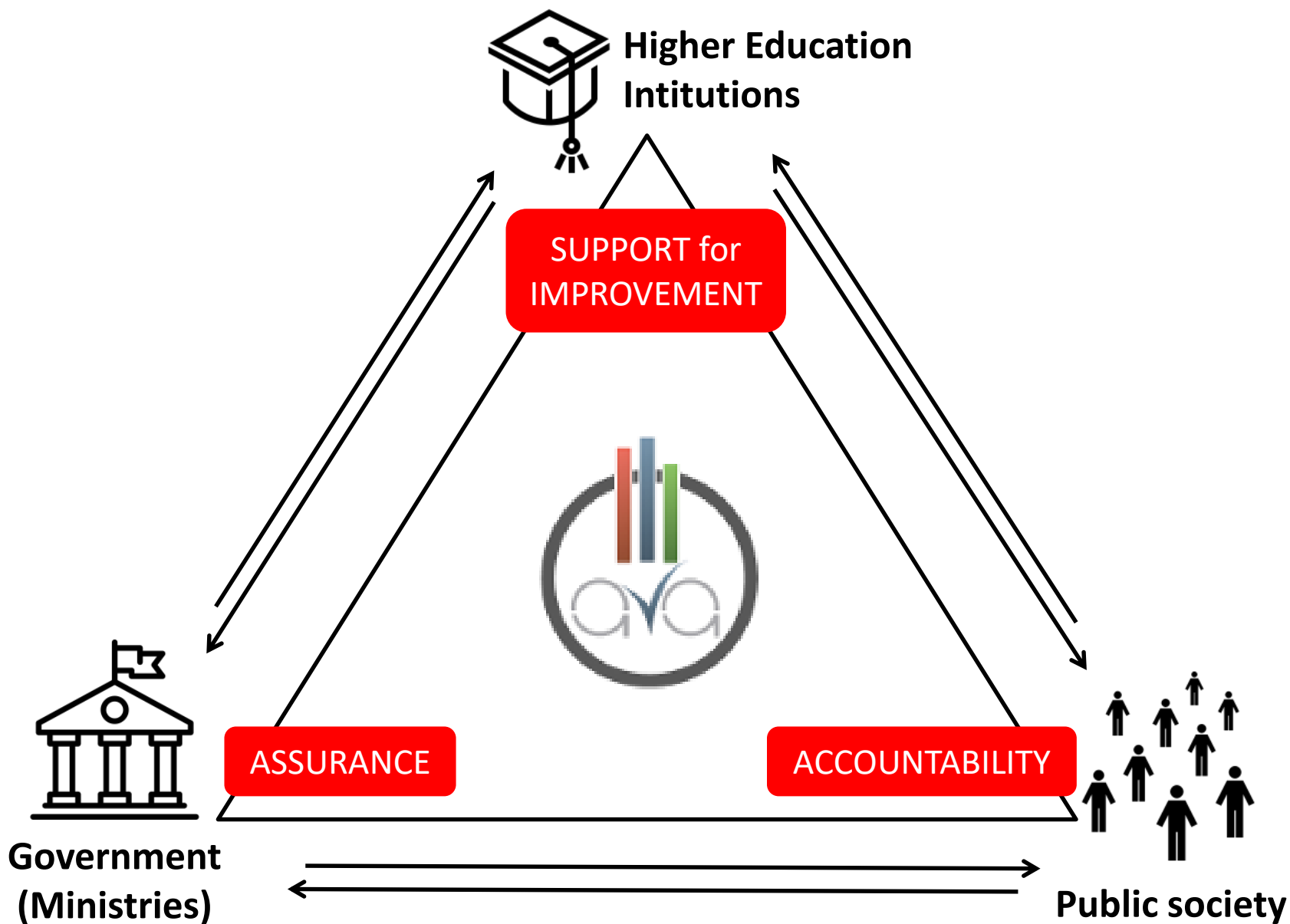
# Accreditation

- Accreditation is the process by which a "third subject" officially recognizes that an organization (higher education institution) has the expertise and resources to carry out its tasks.
- All higher education institutions (public and private) are subject to accreditation.
- ANVUR is responsible for the definition of qualitative and quantitative requirements/indicators for the accreditation of institutions and study programmes.
- The Minister, in accordance with the opinion of ANVUR, grants or denies the accreditation.

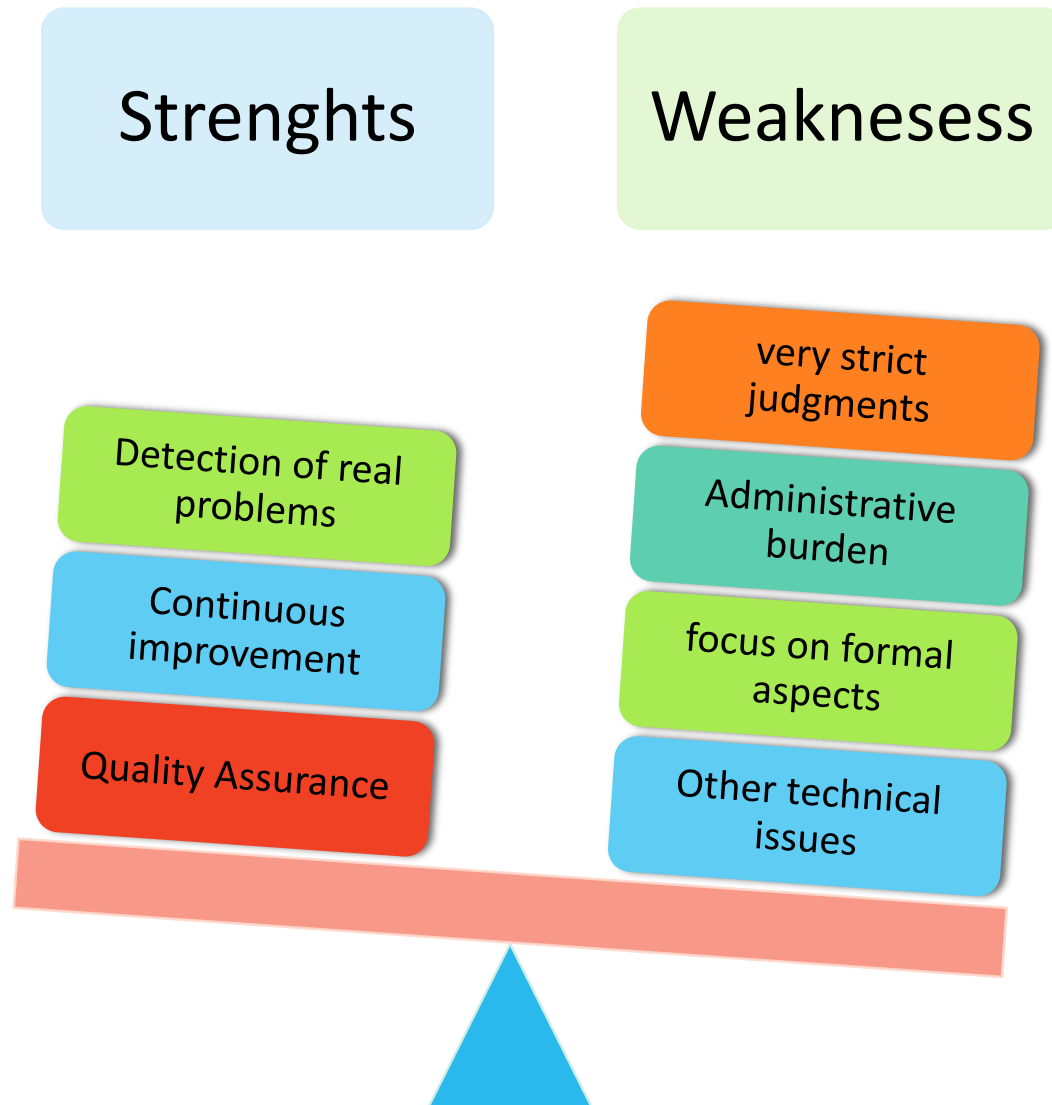
# AVA system aims

The AVA system has been developed to achieve three main objectives:

1. **Assurance**, certified by MIUR and ANVUR, for students and society as a whole, that the Italian higher education institutions meet an adequate level of quality;
2. the responsible and reliable “use of autonomy” by higher education institution. In particular the **accountability** in the use of public resources and the behaviors related to training and research activities;
3. Giving **support** for the improvement of the quality of educational and research activities.



# AVA experience in the first 3 years



# The updated AVA

Following a public consultation a number of changes in accreditation procedures were introduced in 2017.

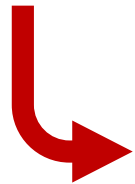
In summary

- More flexible judgement system
- Attention to results, not only processes
- Development of tools for Institutions (databases)



# Structure of AVA requirements

**4 Requisites (DM 6/2019)**

 **11 Indicators (+ 1 for distance learning)**

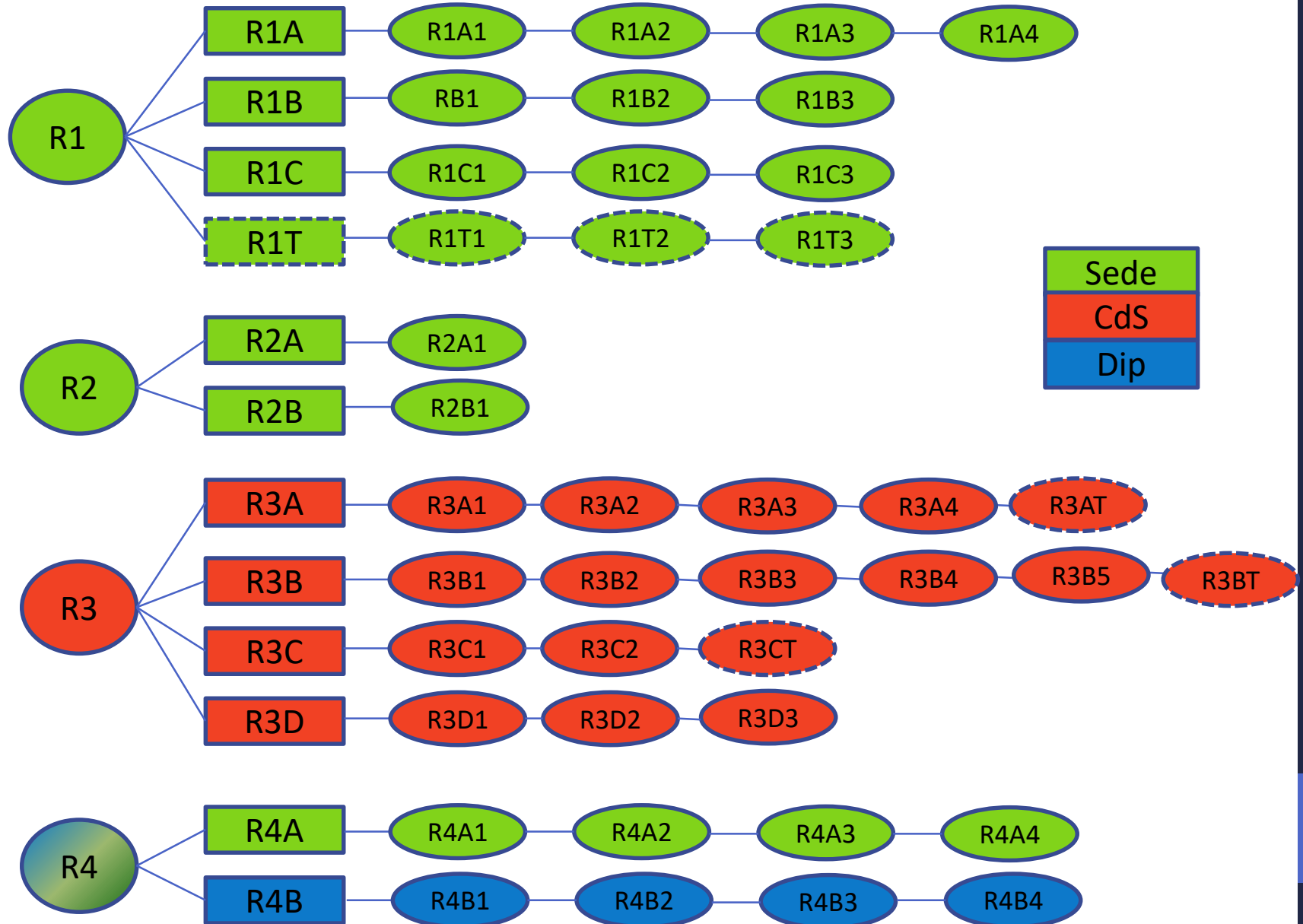
 **34 focus points**

 **different aspects are covered**

## Requisite

## Indicator

## Focus point



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# ESG 2015: internal QA

- 1 • Policy for quality assurance
- 2 • Design and approval of programmes
- 3 • Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- 4 • Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
- 5 • Teaching staff
- 6 • Learning resources and student support
- 7 • Information management
- 8 • Public informations
- 9 • On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- 10 • Cyclical external quality assurance

# Internal QA



**DESIGN CAPABILITY**



**MANAGEMENT OF  
ACTIVITIES**



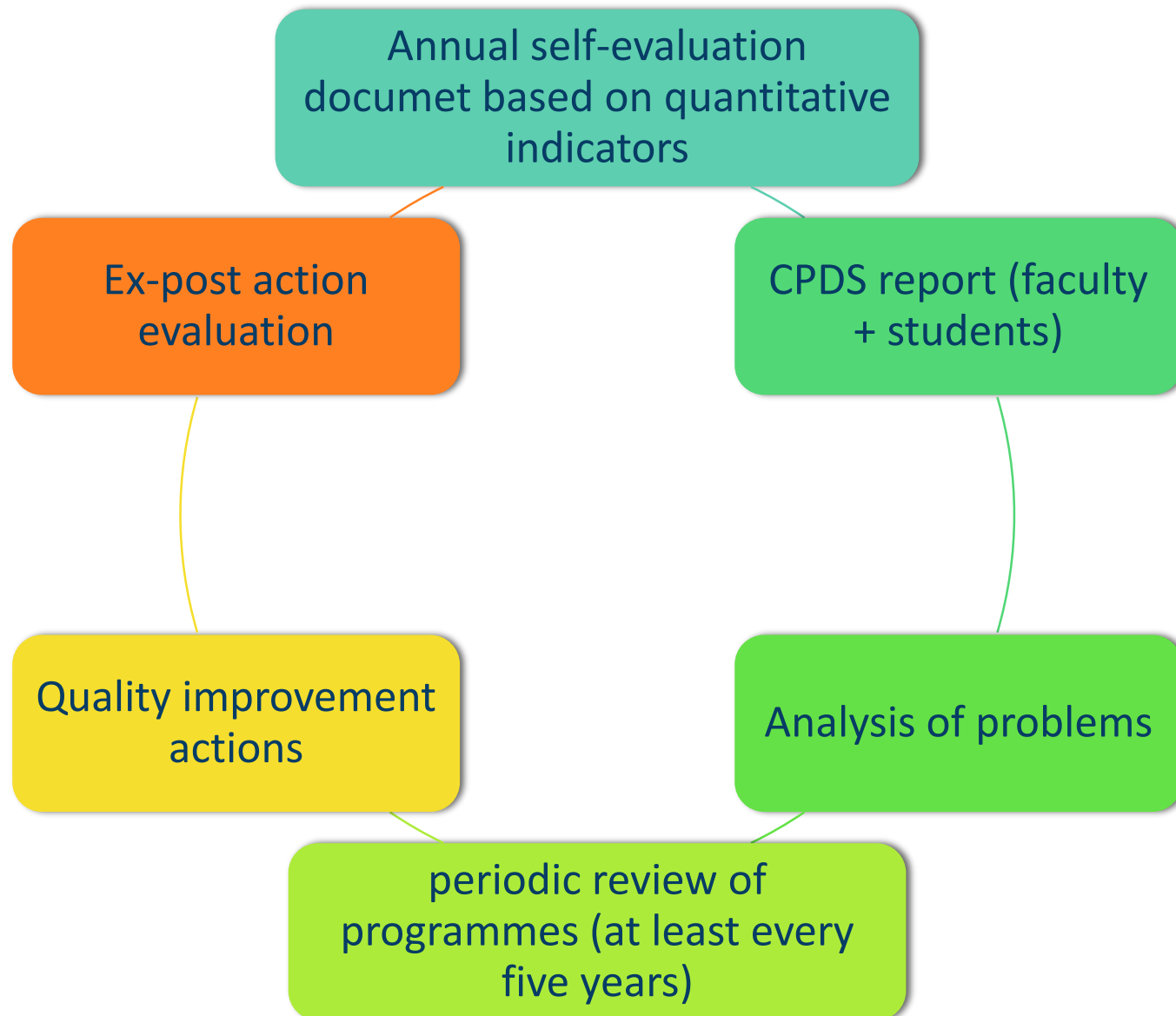
**MONITORING AND  
ASSESSMENT**



**QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

***TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ALL  
STAKEHOLDERS***

# Internal QA for study programmes



# QA and learning outcomes

QA is also useful for Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in HE in Europe

To obtain/provide reliable information about achievements of learning in (transnational) comparative perspective at

- Individual level
- Programme level
- Institutional level
- National level
- International level

to allow for degree programme enhancement focusing on the domain of knowledge taking into account preparation for employment and active citizenship.

Offering main stakeholders reliable information for making informed choices!

- Do students enrolled in higher education around Europe develop the competences they need?
- Are study programmes delivering their promises?
- Can we learn to compare students' achievements in different countries in a meaningful way?

# The «Presidio della Qualità»

- Based on the guidelines defined by the governing bodies, oversees the performance of the institutional QA procedures,.
- Its composition and its operation are defined by the institution.
- Ensures the information flow inside the institution (Nucleo di Valutazione – NdV) and with external bodies (ANVUR)
- Monitors quantitative indicators and is responsible for the dissemination of the results (Programmes, NdV, ANVUR)
- Promotes teaching quality.
- Edit a self-evaluation document based on ANVUR's requirements



## The «Nucleo di Valutazione»

- Assessment of internal quality assurance system at the institutional and programmes level
- According to the current law, writes an annual assessment report for ANVUR
- On-site visit follow-up.

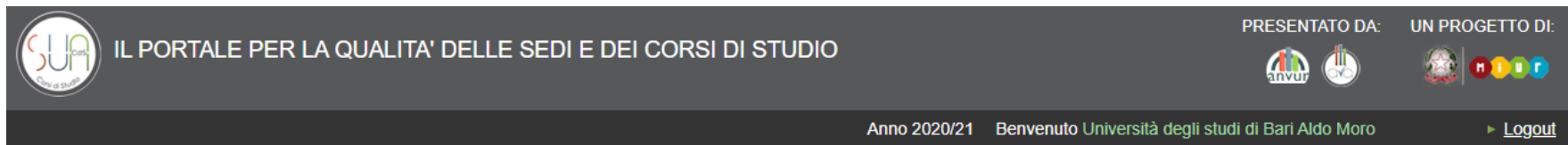
# Student's role in the QA system

- Student representatives could be included in various university bodies.
- Each Institution has at least one panel (Commissione Paritetica Docenti-Studenti - CPDS), composed of an equal number of professors and students, writes an annual report. This report, among other things, takes into account the results of the *teaching questionnaires* delivered to students and indicates possible solutions for the problems that have emerged.
- The annual report is sent to the *Nucleo di Valutazione* (not to ANVUR) and to the study programme teachers.

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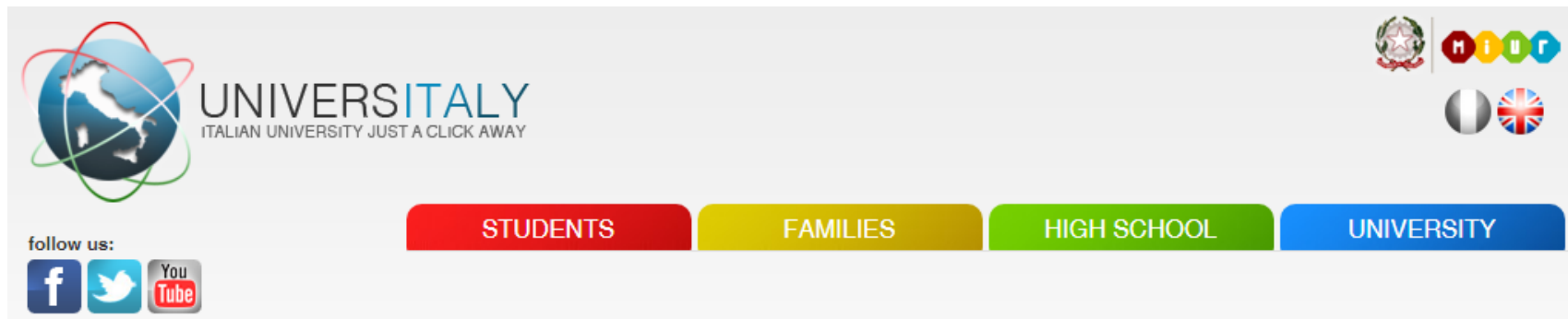
# The SUA-CdS



This database of all study programmes for all universities is designed for both purposes:

- Internal QA
- External QA

Only the information relevant for external stakeholders are made public on the University website:



# Quantitative indicators

ANVUR provides a set of indicators (updated every 3 months) to be used:

- by higher education institutions for self-evaluation purposes;
- by ANVUR to select which programmes will be evaluated during the on-site visit;
- by ANVUR to inform the decisions related to the visit follow-up.

With quantitative indicators it is possible to compare programmes of the same field within the national system.

# Quantitative indicators: the interface

home

IL PORTALE PER LA QUALITA' DEI CORSI DI STUDIO

PRESENTATO DA: UN PROGETTO DI:

Anno 2016/17 Benvenuto

Logout

Monitoraggio annuale indicatori

- Nota metodologica **aggiornata al 16 ottobre 2017** [visualizza](#)
- Elenco dei file ANS disponibili [visualizza](#)
- Elenco dei file con tutti indicatori:
  - [30/12/2017](#) (all'interno di ciascun CdS è possibile scaricare il singolo csv)
  - [30/09/2017](#) (all'interno di ciascun CdS è possibile scaricare il singolo csv)
  - [01/07/2017](#) (all'interno di ciascun CdS è possibile scaricare il singolo csv)
- Per informazioni tecniche: [offertaformativa@cineca.it](mailto:offertaformativa@cineca.it)
- Per informazioni da richiedere ad ANVUR: [indicatori@anvur.it](mailto:indicatori@anvur.it)

**ELENCO CORSI - 2016/2017**

Per abilitare un utente, autorizzato in scrittura sulla classe, ad effettuare una "nuova proposta" di un corso già approvato, bisogna assegnare il corso all'utente tramite l'apposito link "mostra al docente"

Corsi Triennali

methodological notes/instrucions

Visualizza Indicatori al: 30/12/2017 Scarica dati al: 30/12/2017

Visualizza Indicatori al: 01/07/2017 Scarica dati al: 01/07/2017

Visualizza Indicatori al: 30/09/2017 Scarica dati al: 30/09/2017

Commento selezionato come scheda di monitoraggio annuale

Indicators updates

## Scheda del Corso di Studio - 01/07/2017

Scarica la scheda in [pdf](#)

Scarica la scheda [pdf](#) con commento

Denominazione del CdS	Ingegneria Civile-Ambientale
Città	REGGIO DI CALABRIA
Codizione	0800106200700001
Ateneo	Università degli Studi "Mediterranea" di REGGIO CALABRIA
Statale o non statale	Statale
Tipo di Ateneo	Tradizionale
Area geografica	SUD E ISOLE
Classe di laurea	L-7
Interclasse	-
Tipo	Laurea Triennale
Erogazione	Convenzionale
Durata normale	3 anni

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Programmazione Nazionale	No	No	No	No	No
Programmazione Locale	No	No	No	No	No
Nessuna Programmazione	Si	Si	Si	Si	Si

	2015	2014	2013
Nr. di altri CdS della stessa classe nell'Ateneo	0	0	0
Nr. di altri CdS della stessa classe in atenei non telematici nell'area geografica	22	21	21
Nr. di altri CdS della stessa classe in atenei non telematici in Italia	53	53	53

Indicatore	Anno	CdS	Ateneo	Area Geografica non telematici	Atenei NON Telematici
Avvii di carriera al primo anno* (L; LMCU; LM)	2013	134	-	103,4	117,1
	2014	68	-	87,0	103,7
	2015	64	-	73,3	95,2

General programme informations

# Study programme Annual Monitoring Form

Benchmarking - Other programmes of the same discipline:

- within the same institution
- within the same geographical area
- within the national higher education system

Indicator's code

description

calculated over three years

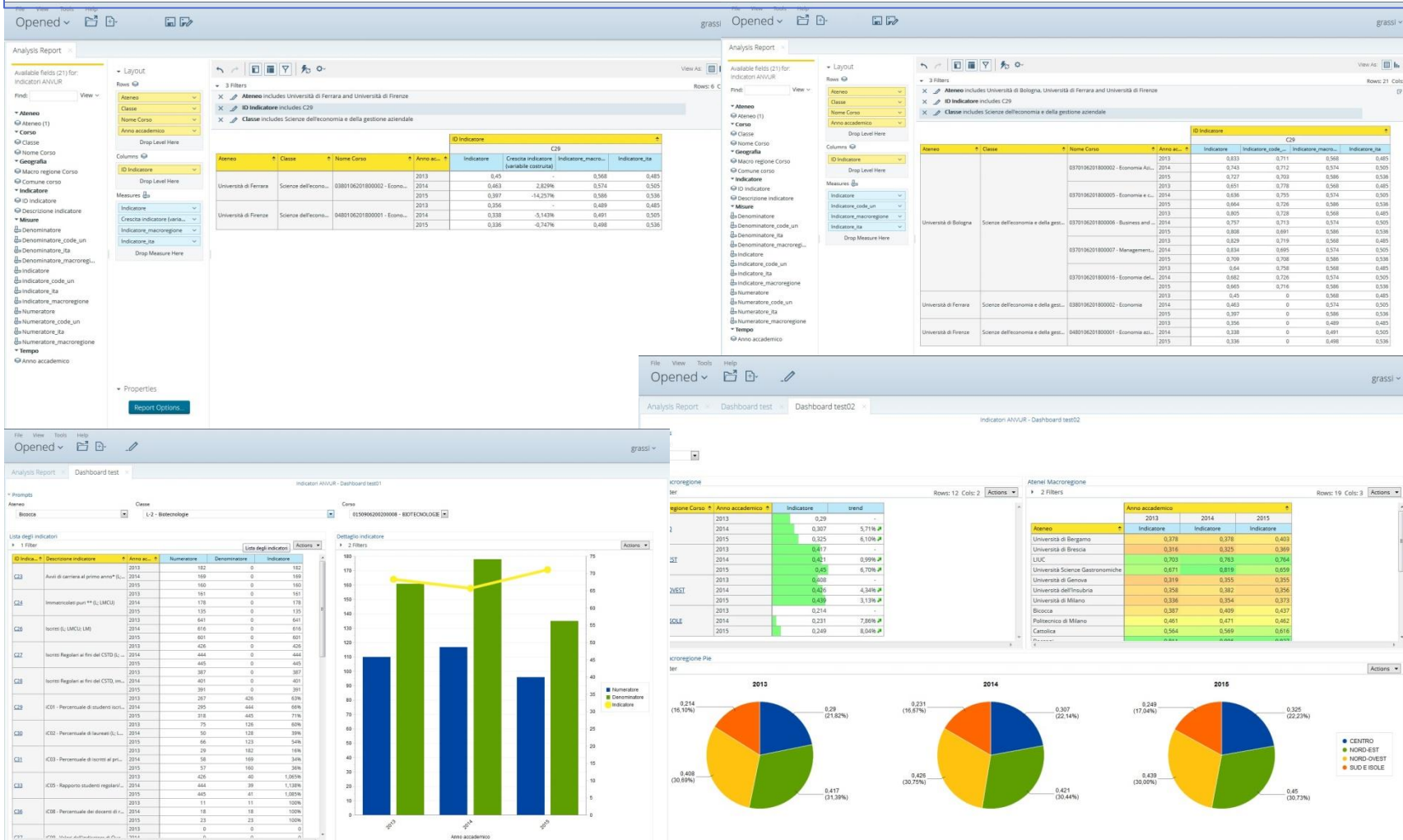
details

Gruppo A - Indicatori Didattica (DM 937/2016, allegato E)

Indicatore	Anno	CdS			Media Ateneo			Media Area Geografica non telematici			Media Atenei NON Telematici		
		Numeratore	Denominatore	Indicatore	Numeratore	Denominatore	Indicatore	Numeratore	Denominatore	Indicatore	Numeratore	Denominatore	Indicatore
iC01													
	2013	90	170	52,9%	260,0	452,0	57,5%	135,0	331,1	40,8%	85,5	300,0	28,5%
	2014	92	175	52,6%	218,0	385,0	56,6%	128,8	299,5	43,0%	90,7	267,5	33,9%
iC02	2015	105	176	59,7%	191,0	316,0	60,4%	108,5	263,9	41,1%	82,0	236,6	34,7%
	2013	22	37	59,5%	39,0	81,0	48,1%	26,2	63,4	41,3%	14,5	37,4	38,8%
	2014	22	34	64,7%	46,0	104,0	44,2%	29,7	79,1	37,5%	16,9	54,6	30,9%
iC03	2015	20	38	52,6%	53,0	136,0	39,0%	29,3	82,2	35,6%	17,1	62,2	27,5%
	2013	21	67	31,3%	48,0	122,0	39,3%	40,5	135,3	29,9%	24,5	118,3	20,7%
	2014	31	76	40,8%	60,0	141,0	42,6%	34,0	110,0	30,9%	21,7	103,5	20,9%
	2015	45	82	54,9%	52,0	114,0	45,6%	33,6	104,9	32,0%	22,0	94,9	23,2%

# The interface by ANVUR

Following the defined objectives, each study programme/University is able to independently establish the benchmarks (aggregate of programmes) with an informatic tool created by ANVUR, and made available to all universities.





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# Strengths & Threats of QA

The QA system could be seen as an **additional burden** to Universities but it is generally recognized that has a **substantial positive effect** on attitudes and behaviours.

Its strength lies in the **focus on procedures**: as the initial costly investment of introducing them has been made, it is unlikely that the new procedures will be discontinued by programmes or universities.

However, procedures may lead to **formal respect** of requirements without truly devoting effort to continuous improvement.

## Some important issues

It is difficult to carry out an assessments: you encounter problems of analysis' methodologies and interpretation of the results (you need to be very careful)

Results (outputs or outcomes) depend on multiple inputs and internal/external factors, thus could be detectable and described at various levels.

Comparison (of programmes, Departments, Institutions) is not always possible, and is not always useful...

# Italy – some strengths & opportunities

## STRENGTHS

- Resilience of procedures once they are introduced
- Reliance on peer review
- Well structured forms as self-assessment tools
- Well defined QA key players
- Highly qualified, committed and experienced experts – autonomy in the evaluation process

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Spread of QA culture and establishment of networks of experts and specialized competences
- IT technologies to guarantee improving continuous training for external experts
- The increase in the number of the experts may foster acceptance in the academic community
- Greater use of outcomes indicators
- Formal (and informal) spreading of good practices

# Italy – some threats

- “Bureaucratization”
- Academic climate against external evaluation
- Inconsistency between outcome indicators and process based evaluation.
- Quality is expensive – demanding assessments and poor public resources for higher education Institutions



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# Thank you for your attention

# The on-site visit

- Is the critical step within the accreditation process
- The aim of the visit is to perform external assessment by peer review
- The panel should evaluate the achievement of quality assurance requirements and identify critical issues (if any).

# The panel of experts (CEV)

System experts



Institutional assessment

Disciplinary experts



Programmes assessment

Students



Institutional and programmes  
assessment

E-learning experts



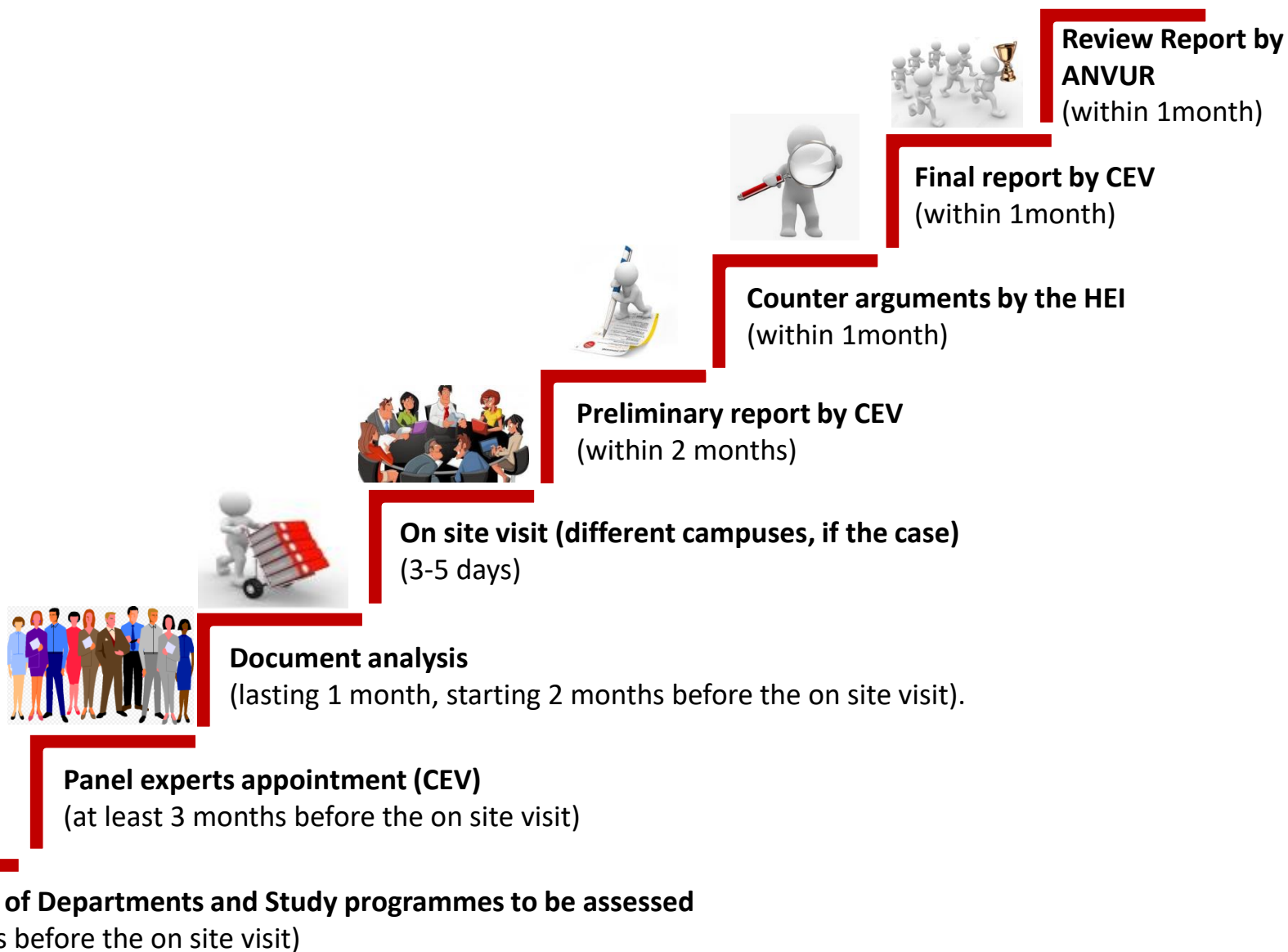
Assessment of E-learning  
programmes and on-line  
institutions



# General assessment procedure

- Document analysis by CEV
- On-site visit by CEV
- evaluation report by CEV
- Final decision and public report by ANVUR
- Visit follow-up by ANVUR

# Institutional accreditation procedure



# Evaluation ratings

LEVEL	RATING	ANVUR's PROPOSAL
A	Very good	5-years accreditation
B	Good	5-years accreditation
C	Sufficient	5-years accreditation
D	Conditioned	The duration of the accreditation is defined according to the panel evaluation and the results of the follow-up
E	Not sufficient	Revocation of accreditation