



Agència
per a la Qualitat
del Sistema Universitari
de Catalunya

Final report assessing the design of the internal quality assurance system

The Higher Technical School of Castelldefels
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (The Technical
University of Catalonia, UPC)

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I. DETAILS CONCERNING THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM (IQAS) UNDER ASSESSMENT

University	The Technical University of Catalonia
Centre	The Higher Technical School of Castelldefels
IQAS scope	Degrees taught at the Higher Technical School of Castelldefels
Call	2007 – Stage II

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE DESIGN OF THE IQAS

Having examined the report drawn up by the Assessment Committee, the AQU Catalunya Specific Committee for the Quality Assessment of University Centres and Activities issued an overall **POSITIVE** assessment relating to the design of the IQAS for the Higher Technical School of Castelldefels.

The final assessment given for each of the guidelines is as follows:

1.0 Quality goals and policy	Good
1.1 Quality assurance of training programmes	Satisfactory
1.2 Extent to which teaching is student-oriented	Good
1.3 Quality improvement and assurance of academic and teaching support staff	Satisfactory
1.4a Management and improvement of services and material resources	Satisfactory
1.4b Management and improvement of the quality of services and administration staff	Satisfactory
1.5 Analysis and use of results	Satisfactory
1.6 Publication of information on degrees	Satisfactory

The overall **POSITIVE** assessment given to the IQAS is based on the **good** or **satisfactory** assessment given to the guidelines set out in the AUDIT programme, and it is likewise founded on the identification of specific, cross-disciplinary positive aspects that lend the design of the IQAS its robust nature.

With respect to the design of the IQAS and the assessment prior to its implementation, **positive aspects** refer to systematically designed elements described in sufficient detail making it possible to assume they will be successfully implemented with a certain degree of assurance. Even so, the Higher Technical School of Castelldefels (EPSC) is advised to take these aspects into consideration within the framework of an ongoing improvement process.

The design of the EPSC IQAS is based on an overall approach for all UPC centres and is carried out in conjunction with individual development on the part of the centre itself. The overall UPC approach with regard to the working methodology, the structure and the common design of the IQAS (SAIQ according to the UPC's own nomenclature) is valued satisfactorily. Moreover, it enables each centre to carry out its specific tasks except in the case of cross-disciplinary processes put forward by the Technical University of Catalonia which affect guidelines 1.3 and 1.4b. As for these processes, the general handling of aspects relating to academic and services and administration staff, which in the case of the latter even includes more information than that requested in the AUDIT programme, is considered to be a positive aspect of the IQAS.

With regard to the design presented by the Higher Technical School of Castelldefels (EPSC), it fits in with the guidelines set out in the AUDIT programme with an efficient structure, satisfactory detail and clarity. It is comprehensive, easy to follow, practical and focussed on quality assurance and continual improvement.

Certification of the centre's quality management system according to standard ISO 9001 in 1999 was seen as a positive element, and this certification has been renewed up to the present. This constitutes a commitment and culture of quality that is well-established at the centre.

As far as **cross-disciplinary** aspects are concerned, elements strengthening the design of the IQAS include the quality manual submitted by the UPC as a framework for all centres. It uses a classical documentation system allowing for compatibility with other quality assurance systems, such as standard ISO 9001. What is more, this manual sets out the members and bodies involved in the processes (annexes 1 and 2) and it includes a process file (annex 3).

Reports on the internal and external audits, the review thereof by the management and the annual report are aspects which strengthen the design of the IQAS inasmuch as they are documents that form the basis for an analysis of results. The internal and external audits envisaged ensure that non-conformities are identified and addressed and they also assure that an independent third party is involved in the review of the IQAS, thereby lending added value in terms of transparency.

The use of flowcharts associated with these processes is another positive area identified in the IQAS.

Additionally, and **specifically for each guideline**, different aspects are identified which ensure successful implementation of the IQAS.

With regard to the **quality goals and policy** (guideline 1.0), a positive assessment is given to the existence of a quality policy based on the manual and quality goals related to the strategic plan. Furthermore, the existence of a quality manager and the involvement of stakeholders in the quality committee (formed by management staff, teaching and research staff, services and administration staff and students) lend the system greater strength. The inclusion of annual planning in relation to the review of this guideline both internally as well as externally is seen as another valid aspect of the IQAS.

In relation to the **quality assurance of training programmes** (guideline 1.1), a positive note is made of the systematic approach to the design, monitoring, planning, development and review of degrees. Specifically, a review of subject programmes and assessment criteria is addressed for which the learning outcomes are used.

Several positive areas have been identified with regard to the extent to which **teaching is student-oriented** (guideline 1.2). Specifically, aspects that strengthen the IQAS include: the performance of proactive actions to draw in students, the “quality in the classroom” teaching project, the attention to detail for student-teacher relations by means of tutoring with individual monitoring, general management of external training and student mobility, checks and monitoring on complaints and claims, as well as the existence of mechanisms assuring professional guidance for students.

The **quality improvement and assurance of academic and teaching support staff** (guideline 1.3) includes mechanisms governing and assuring decision making regarding the admission of academic and teaching support staff, which strengthen the suitable assessment given to the IQAS. In addition, the process for assuring the quality of training for teaching and research staff is suited to achieving success, particularly in light of the regularity with which the actions are carried out, the three fields set out in the training plan: integration, initial and ongoing training, the mechanisms for reviewing, monitoring and assessing the plan, the involvement of teaching and research staff in the analysis by means of satisfaction surveys, as well as the definition of indicators, among other areas. Lastly, information systems and the existence of channels for staff involvement are also observed as strong points in the IQAS.

With regard to the **management and improvement of services and material resources** (guideline 1.4a), widespread use has been observed of computer and/or online applications as a positive aspect for the quality system.

As far as the **management and improvement of the quality of services and administration staff** is concerned (guideline 1.4b), despite not being called for within the AUDIT programme guidelines, aspects relating to admission, training, assessment, promotion and acknowledgment of services and administration staff were defined in tandem with aspects relating to research and teaching staff, and they are effectively compiled and developed.

Two positive aspects have been identified in relation to the **analysis and use of results** (guideline 1.5). Firstly, as a result of certification according to ISO 9001, greater strength has been identified with respect to the internal and external auditing system, the review by management and the annual report forming the information on which an analysis of results is founded. Secondly, mechanisms for regulating decision making on learning outcomes, which deal with the verification and reliability of the data used, are highlighted as one of the components giving the guideline greater strength.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE IQAS

The assessment conducted on the design of the IQAS has led to the identification of a number of opportunities for improvement in certain areas. As a result, the Higher Technical School of Castelldefels is advised to carry out an overhaul on these aspects in the short- or medium-term to ensure that the IQAS is smoothly implemented.

The **opportunities for improvement** identified in UPC's overall approach include mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and effecting improvements, vital elements for smooth management of quality, which must be explained in greater depth. On several occasions, reference is made to point 8 on "responsibilities", which neither sets out the mechanisms nor states the regularity with which actions must be carried out. It even fails to indicate a monitoring methodology. Furthermore, indicators that are vital for gauging results are often overlooked.

As far as the rendering of accounts is concerned, this area needs to be enhanced and the mechanisms need to be set out depending on the information to be provided and the intended recipients. Reference to the publication of information on degrees (guideline 1.6) is poor since it fails to detail this area. Rendering of accounts should not be confused with simply providing interested parties with information and it must include an assessment of the suitability and adequacy of content, as well as the effectiveness of channels for informing stakeholders.

Lastly, it is advisable to establish ties between the quality systems proposed by the centres as well as the mechanisms and courses envisaged for the strategic lines pertaining to the basic units specified for the UPC as a whole.

As far as the **design of the IQAS submitted by the EPSC** is concerned, various cross-disciplinary suggestions have been made. Firstly, it is advisable to include a summary of functions relating to the key duties within each guideline or process in order to give the IQAS manual greater agility, since the duties of those in charge are generally defined in major regulatory documents that must be accessed over the website. Secondly, it would be pertinent to specify how stakeholders shall be involved with each guideline because the IQAS manual only sets out a generalised description of mechanisms for participation and involvement on the part of stakeholders.

Specifically for each guideline the following aspects are recommended for improvement in order to ensure smooth implementation of the IQAS.

The **quality assurance of training programmes** (guideline 1.1) must incorporate a description of the route by which information makes it to the annual report (a key document for rendering accounts). In terms of input, the flowchart considers learning outcomes, though the process for designing, monitoring, planning and reviewing degrees fails to include any output in order to implement improvements or inform stakeholders. Similarly, even if the decision to ultimately suspend a degree is incumbent on the Technical University of Catalonia, the criteria which may lead to the consideration of this situation or how the centre will address this suspension must be set out.

With respect to the extent to which **teaching is student-oriented** (guideline 1.2), it is recommended that stakeholders become more involved in defining the training, admission and registration profiles, since only the surveys on the integration plan have been considered as results. Information from services and administration staff with regard to admission and registration should also be taken into account.

In the case of the **quality improvement and assurance of academic and teaching support staff** (guideline 1.3), it is advisable to include in the IQAS those specific aspects that favour staff satisfaction and the quality of teaching activities, although the academic and teaching support staff policy is governed by the university as a whole. Likewise, greater endeavours must be made on the mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and improving models for assessment, promotion and acknowledgment (who and how), since there has been some merge observed between responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring and improvement. Lastly, it would be pertinent to define responsibilities and the manner in which actions should be carried out by the Teaching Staff Development Service which – according to the flowchart – monitors and assesses work posts.

As far as the **management and improvement of services and material resources** goes (guideline 1.4a), it is advisable to define the mechanisms for involvement on the part of stakeholders. For instance, it is not known whether students, services and administration staff or technical staff, are able to propose new resources or services. Moreover, it is important to specify how an assessment should be conducted on how students make use of material resources at the centre.

The **management and improvement of the quality of services and administration staff** (guideline 1.4b) includes a couple of opportunities for improvement. The first relates to the need to include in the centre's IQAS those specific aspects that favour satisfaction on the part of services and administration staff, although the policy for this group is governed by the university as a whole. Secondly, it is advisable for greater detail to be given when specifying how departments and their managers (unit and service directors or the management) should be involved when defining, reviewing and improving the services and administration staff policy (for instance, when specifying how to go about renewing contracts).

It has also been identified that evidence relating to the **analysis and use of results** (guideline 1.5.) should include a table of indicators and the monitoring of such indicators as a key element for analysing and assessing results. Moreover, it would be pertinent to describe which strategies will be applied and how in order to improve and examine learning outcomes, and how developments in this regard may be compared with those of other UPC centres or centres from other (benchmark) universities offering the same degrees. It is also observed that the analysis and use of results on employment integration and satisfaction of stakeholders is not addressed to a satisfactory degree.

The **publication of information on degrees** (guideline 1.6) requires greater endeavours in the case of most procedures linked to this guideline. Moreover, despite setting out communication channels, it would be suitable for mechanisms to be laid down with respect to decision making, monitoring, the review of and improvements to the publication of information.

IV. ANNEX: MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Chair	Mr Ángel Ríos Castro Vice-dean of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences of the University of Castilla-La Mancha
Academic member	Mr José Joaquín Mira Solves Agent to the vice-chancellor for Transverse Quality Actions of Miguel Hernández University
Academic member	Ms Maria Jesús Mairata Creus Director of the Statistics and Quality Services of the University of the Balearic Islands
Professional member	Ms Concepció Curet Santiesteban Director of GlobalMed S.L.L.
Clerk	Ms Núria Comet Señal Coordinator of projects and internal quality for AQU Catalunya