



Agència
per a la Qualitat
del Sistema Universitari
de **Catalunya**

GUIDE TO THE ACCREDITATION OF RECOGNISED FIRST AND SECOND CYCLE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Version: 1.0

November 2013



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Guide endorsed by AQU's Quality Assurance Commission (CAQ) on 15 November 2013.

First edition: November 2013

Legal deposit: B-28.221-2013



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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The what, why and how of accreditation

One of the consequences in the Catalan university system of the political creation of the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**, as a culmination of what is socially known as the Bologna Process, has been the amendment by both the Spanish national government and the Catalan government (Generalitat de Catalunya) of the regulatory framework governing the approval by the educational authorities of proposals for new university degree programmes. Terms such as *validation*, *monitoring* and *accreditation*, together with their associated processes, are now common in the academic panorama and in the work of the bodies in charge of carrying out these procedures.

The resulting processes arguably constitute the visible form of the proper functioning of a **quality assurance system** that all university systems in Europe need to have set in place. To quote one of the better-known experts in Europe, A. I. Vroeijsstijn,¹ if the quality assurance system is the instrument that brings together the internal and external assurance of quality, then:

"Quality assurance may be described as a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and quality improvement. Continuous quality care is a sine qua non for quality assurance. One of the tools in the field of quality care is quality assessment."

Accreditation is an original "assessment model" in contexts where there is little state regulation, such as North America, where there is a patchy presence of government educational authorities. As such, and because of its widespread nature, it constitutes the main way of evaluating university courses. Internationalisation, and especially the globalisation of higher education, has led to the "model" spreading to other countries over the last twenty years. However, as L. Harvey points out:²

"The context and stage of development of higher education within any system is a key variable in determining the importance of accreditation."

Within the context of Europe, prior experience with quality assurance in the different states was definitively **consolidated** in May 2005, when the ministers responsible for Higher Education at the meeting in Bergen adopted the **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area** (European Standards and Guidelines, ESG), which were

¹ Vroeijsstijn, A. I. (1995) *Improvement and Accountability: Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: Guide for External Quality Assessment in Higher Education*. London: Jessica Kingsley (p. xviii).

² Harvey, L. (2004) "The Power of Accreditation: Views of Academics". A: Di Nauta, P.; Omar, P. L.; Schade, A.; Scheele, J. P. (ed. 2004) *Accreditation Models in Higher Education. Experiences and Perspectives*. Helsinki: European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (pp. 5-19).

drafted by ENQA.³ The ESG lay down the standards for internal and external quality assurance (QA) processes in higher education, which in the case of external quality assurance should be undertaken on a cyclical basis (standard 2.7). External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes (2.1) and their aims and objectives (2.2) and criteria (2.3) determined and published, with processes that are fit for purpose (2.4). The ESG set out a series of general principles that are specified in each state participating in the EHEA according to their context and legal regulations.

Within the context of Catalonia, and in accordance with the presence of the Spanish state regulatory authorities, accreditation can be seen as either an administrative process or act that is in compliance with a legal mandate and officialises and/or legalizes the academic credentials (qualifications) awarded to university students by universities. The external quality assurance of higher education was first incorporated into Spanish regulations with royal decrees 1393/2007 and 99/2011, whereby the ESG were adopted. Regulatory changes have been made over the last ten years in relation to the implementation of the EHEA, and it is likely there will be more in the future, although the introduction of changes affecting compulsory internal and external quality assurance does not seem plausible, however, inasmuch as this forms an intrinsic part of the EHEA, as mentioned above.

The question of what does an accreditation or review of the quality of a study programme or higher education institution (HEI) consist of was answered in 2008 by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) in very simple terms, as far as what is understood internationally, when it stated that it consists of four components: a national or external organisation, a self-assessment, an external review or audit – including a site visit – and a public report.

Vickie Schray,⁴ in the discussion on the future of accreditation in the US, mentions several points of particular interest:

- The accreditation system in the United States has been used for more than a hundred years as the primary vehicle for defining and assuring quality in the delivery of higher education services.
- In the complex public-private system in the US, recognised accreditation organisations develop quality standards and manage the process for determining whether institutions and programmes meet these standards and can be formally accredited.
- Accrediting organisations play a key “gatekeeper” role in higher education because accreditation is used to determine whether higher education institutions and programmes are eligible to receive federal and state grants.

³ <http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_44505772_1.pdf>

⁴ Schray, V. (n.d.) *Assuring Quality in Higher Education: Key Issues and Questions for Changing Accreditation in the United States*. [Issue paper. Fourth in a series of Issue Papers released at the request of Chairman Charles Miller to inform the work of the Commission]. A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education’s Commission.

- Accreditation provides the primary means to inform and protect consumers against fraud and abuse.

This last aspect, which is increasingly necessary within a context of globalisation in higher education, constitutes the ultimate reason for accreditation: **to assure the user that academic programmes offered by HEIs comply not only with the formal and administrative requirements regulated by the authority, but that the “level of study” achieved by their graduates corresponds to that certified by the HEI (the type of degree programme).**

An accredited programme of study ultimately needs to have shown that:

- It complies with the legal requirements laid down by the competent authority (name of the degree programme, number of ECTS credits, structure of the curriculum, admission requirements and criteria, etc.).
- The programme's academic proposal complies, in terms of the intended learning outcome, with the Qualifications Framework in Spain (QF-EHEA in Spain⁵) according to the level of the programme (First Cycle, Second Cycle, doctorate), and also with the current nature and relevance of the disciplinary knowledge that underlies it.
- It has been delivered with appropriate resources (teaching staff, learning support services, infrastructure and physical resources).
- Grades that are issued (course/subject and degree qualifications) conform to relevant and appropriate procedures for the assessment of student learning outcomes, which in turn demonstrate the required level of quality.
- The academic background of graduates, in terms of advancement, graduation and employability, corresponds with the characteristics of the students and the potential of the labour market.
- There are internal quality assurance mechanisms that ensure periodic analysis of the learning process aimed at the continuous enhancement of study and learning by the students.

The characteristics of university systems in Europe, which are a consequence of the public university model, have brought about an equality in the quality objectives for the system of universities in each country and, as a priority objective, efforts have been made to ensure that each institution and programme has a homogeneous level of quality. A hierarchy between institutions or faculties has been explicitly excluded from governmental intentions. With the creation of the EHEA a new problem has emerged as a consequence of the recognition of qualifications and professional mobility between different European countries. From the perspective of the globalisation of higher education, there are a series of key issues that the “accreditation model” attempts to address:

- Do the graduates of university *X* deserve to be holders of a degree in *A*?
- What is the level of quality of qualification *A* at university *X*?

⁵ MECES: *Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior*

- Is qualification *A* from university *X* the same level as qualification *A* from university *Z*?
- Is university *X* required to recognise the part of programme *A* taken in university *Z*?
- Are EU Member States required to recognise the competences for entry to professional practice granted by qualification *A* from university *X* in country *J*?

Accreditation, designed and developed in accordance with international criteria such as those set out in the ESG, ultimately seeks to provide a guarantee of the **equivalence between learning outcomes and the level of qualification at European level**. Several of the caveats expressed by experts on its ultimate effectiveness should however be taken into consideration. As Harvey⁶ points out in regard to this new situation, Europe may well be rushing precipitously into accreditation as the prevalent model in quality assurance, without consideration, especially by HEIs, of the underpinning politics of accreditation. The path to accreditation is one that is highly political and fundamentally about a shift in power that is concealed behind a new public management ideology cloaked in consumerist demand and European conformity.

Out of an acute sense of responsibility and public service, the approach adopted by AQU Catalunya, in conformity with the current legal framework of the VSMA Framework and the Agency's efforts to collaborate within REACU (the Spanish body that brings together all higher education QA agencies), aims at **reinforcing the internal validation carried out by HEIs themselves. It is only the Catalan universities themselves, both individually and as a system as a whole, that can assure the quality of the programmes of study and educational services that they offer**. The function of AQU Catalunya is to contribute, as an external validation body, to the achievement of this purpose.

The accreditation process should:

- Assure the quality of the programmes of study being offered, in accordance with the established levels of qualification and the criteria laid down in the prevailing regulations.
- Secure valid and reliable information that helps the users of the university system to make decisions.
- Facilitate the internal quality enhancement of the programmes and services delivered by Catalan universities.
- Include the process of validation stemming from proposals for substantial modifications.

In order to achieve these objectives, the accreditation model being proposed assumes the following:

- **International equivalence.** AQU Catalunya, as a recognised agency and member of the European QA organisations (ENQA, EQAR), must adopt QA criteria and guidelines in accordance with this status (the ESG).

⁶ Harvey, L. (2004) "The Power of Accreditation: Views of Academics". A: Di Nauta, P.; Omar, P. L.; Schade, A.; Scheele, J. P. (ed. 2004) *Accreditation Models in Higher Education. Experiences and Perspectives*. Helsinki: European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (pp. 5-19).

- **The involvement of each HEI in the assessment of the evidence and grounds for enhancement actions.** Internal validation or self-assessment is a key part of the process.
- **Integration of accountability and continuous enhancement** as a way of integrating both internal and external requirements.
- Special attention to **student learning outcomes**, which are fundamental evidence of the quality of learning.
- **Recognition of progress, good practices and outstanding quality** as a sign of the need for the adoption of the principle that accreditation should promote the continuous enhancement of study programmes.
- **Transparency and publicising of the processes and outcomes, a fundamental objective for ensuring the credibility of decision-making.** This also involves the guarantee of defence for HEIs in relation to final decisions in a process of appeal.

2. Beyond accreditation: monitoring for quality enhancement

As is very clearly pointed out in the guideline corresponding to the standard associated with compliance with recommendations resulting from quality assurance for the purposes of accreditation (ESG 2.6):

“Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: It should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented.”

A distinctive feature of AQU Catalunya in all of **its quality assurance processes has been the clear focus on enhancement**, regardless of any formal restrictions that may have momentarily occurred in policy frameworks. One clear indicator was the drafting and publication in 2005 of the ***General framework for the establishment, follow-up and review of improvement plans***.

Consistent with this awareness and on the basis of the outcome of the QA assessment procedure in the accreditation stage, a clear point of reference for monitoring, which is currently entering a new cycle in the current quality assurance model, is the post-accreditation enhancement plan. The objective is to ensure that the HEI deals rapidly with potential areas for improvement and enhancement, with encouragement being given to excel. This approach leads to new objectives in monitoring, while at the same time allowing for a series of accountability requirements required up until now in the first cycle of monitoring, which are now part of the internal QA system, to be disposed with.

3. Beyond accreditation: self-accredited/self-accrediting faculties

External systems of quality assurance in higher education are continuously evolving in order to better adhere to the principle of adaption to the ever-changing realities of HEIs, in a context of globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education activities.

The regulatory and operational frameworks that at the present time constitute external quality assurance in the Catalan university system have been in place for a relatively short period of time; nevertheless, it is nonetheless true that the extent and intensity of action by AQU Catalunya, in co-responsibility with the Catalan universities, together with the mature characteristics of the Catalan university system, has generated a body of know-how that provides answers to the challenges of advancing the enhancement of internal QA systems in HEIs and thereby **reduces the requirements for external supervision**.

In line with experiences initiated in the international context,⁷ the current substantive, complete and sequential process in Catalonia (validation-monitoring-accreditation) contains all of the necessary ingredients for the award of the *self-accrediting faculty certificate* to faculties that have demonstrated the soundness of their QA mechanisms, taking into account the outcomes of the validation-monitoring-accreditation of all of their degree programmes (First Cycle and Second Cycle).

In the international context, self-accreditation is an indicator of autonomy and implies that HEIs with this label can accredit and issue qualifications without the need for external approval. Self-accreditation is a characteristic of universities all around the world and a consequence of their long history as centres of knowledge and learning. Self-accreditation implies an HEI's exemption from the external validation of its programmes by virtue of the maturity of its internal QA systems.

Given that this approach is still not dealt with in current regulatory and operational frameworks, necessary caution has led to the postponement of the specifications for both the requirements for and the benefits of acquiring the status of self-accredited (or self-accrediting) faculty. The analysis and assessment of the overall outcomes of the process set out in the VSMA Framework, which currently serves as the focus for AQU Catalunya's activities (for which this

⁷ **United Kingdom:** Universities in the UK that have a Royal Charter may offer their own degrees and are as such self-accrediting, although they do not tend to use the term.

Australia: Self-accrediting HEIs are established by or under relevant state, territory and Commonwealth legislation and have authority to accredit and issue their own qualifications. There are 44 self-accrediting higher education providers in Australia. These institutions have the authority to accredit their own courses. These consist of 37 public universities, two private universities and one Australian branch of an overseas university. In addition, there are three institutions which are not universities but have self-accrediting status: Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, the Australian Film, Television and Radio School and the Australian College of Theology.

Hong Kong: In HK there is a binary divide in the higher education sector which distinguishes between "self-accrediting" and "non-self-accrediting" institutions. For the non-self-accrediting institutions, a process of accreditation is adopted, whereas the self-accrediting institutions are subjected to periodic audits or reviews. The more mature institutions, which are more developed in terms of internal quality assurance, are no longer required to undergo external accreditation, and these are the eight institutions currently being funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC).

Malaysia: Self-accreditation status was given to eight higher education institutions for the first time in Malaysia in 2010. These HEIs can now accredit their own programmes without having to apply through the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. Nevertheless, the self-accreditation status does not include professional programmes, which still need accreditation and recognition from the relevant professional bodies.

guide constitutes the final part), will determine the definitive design of the procedure for this purpose.

In the final analysis, this approach of looking to the future is in total alignment with the essence of the EUA's (European Universities Association) Graz Declaration of 2003 and ESG (2.1), which states that:

“It is important that the institutions’ own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.”

The *quid pro quo* for the efforts and conviction of Catalan universities to move ahead with the development of effective and efficient systems for dealing with the requirements of the external quality assurance of their activities should be external QA processes that are less exhaustive, less frequent and also less bureaucratic in the university system.

II. ORGANISATION AND PLANNING OF ACCREDITATION

1. The regulatory framework

The setting up of the EHEA has led to a significant increase in the **autonomy of the universities to formulate new First Cycle, Second Cycle and doctorate degree courses**. Spanish legislation of 2007 (Organic Law 4/2007, 12 April, which amended Organic Law 6/2001, 21 December, on the universities, and is referred to as the LOMLOU), laid the foundation for the adaptation of the universities and qualifications in Spain to EHEA guidelines. Amongst other things, the new legislation established a new structure for university courses and qualifications. Subsequently, Royal Decree 1393/2007, 29 October, (which was amended by Royal Decrees 861/2010 and 99/2011), established the precepts for the academic governance of recognised programmes and awards. In line with the principles of the LOMLOU, this legislation broadened university autonomy in order for the universities themselves, in accordance with the prevailing regulations, to create and propose degree courses and qualifications without the need to comply with a set catalogue or list of degrees, as was previously the case.

The counterbalance to this increase in university autonomy lies in the fact that all proposals for new degree courses are subject to an **ex-ante assessment process** (known as **validation**) and, either four years later (in the case of Second Cycle degrees) or six years later (for First Cycle and doctoral degrees), an **ex-post assessment process (accreditation)**, in accordance with the procedure and deadlines laid down by the Generalitat de Catalunya, which involves a site visit by an external audit panel to the university. Between these two processes the universities carry out the annual **monitoring** of the delivery of programmes that have been introduced, in accordance with their internal quality assurance system. The criteria for accreditation are set jointly by member QA agencies of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) registered with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), in accordance with international standards for quality assurance, in particular the ESG, and other prevailing legal regulations.

On 2 July 2010 the AQU Board of Management approved the **Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degree programmes (VSMA Framework)**⁸, the objective of which was to lay the groundwork for these four processes by linking them in a logical way in order to establish conceptual coherence and continuity and promote greater efficiency in the management of the different QA processes. In this regard, this guide provides the specific methodology and procedure for the last of these processes, i.e. accreditation.

⁸ < http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_27365192_1.pdf >

2. From validation to accreditation

Over and above the requirements of the existing regulatory framework, AQU Catalunya, through its governing bodies, is committed to enhancing the importance of university and faculty/departmental internal quality assurance systems in external QA procedures and activities involving First and Second Cycle programmes.

The Agency's approach is fully consistent with the ESG, which state that:

“Such external evaluations largely depend for their full effectiveness on there being an explicit internal quality assurance strategy, with specific objectives, and on the use, within institutions, of mechanisms and methods aimed at achieving those objectives.”

The frame of reference and the working procedures set out in the VSMA Framework, as well as the approach and contents of this guide, consequently place particular emphasis on assessing the workings of the internal quality assurance system. The evaluation of internal procedures must include consideration of the body of evidence that has been produced in a sequential and progressive way in the validation and monitoring stages. It is the quality of all of this evidence that, duly documented, will assure AQU Catalunya's compliance with standard 2.1 of the ESG (Use of internal quality assurance procedures):

“If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then **external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.**”

If validated proposals, as a result of their sufficient quality, and monitoring reports, in particular the preparatory report for accreditation (self-assessment report), as a result of their comprehensiveness and relevance, are proof that programme delivery is of sufficient quality, this will ultimately bring about a **reduction in the extent and intensity of** accreditation-based external audit and the institution will be able to focus more on aspects that are of special interest to it. In the pre-accreditation site visit (see the section on “Accreditation process”), **the external audit panel identifies, together with the faculty and institution, the aspects that merit attention** in the different focus groups that comprise the audit visit.

3. The faculty as a unit of assessment

According to the current academic governance of recognised programmes in Spain, the accreditation of recognised degrees and awards (First Cycle, Second Cycle and doctorate) must be periodically renewed in accordance with the established procedure. Accreditation is therefore applicable to all recognised academic programmes that have been introduced in Catalan universities in order for them to maintain their status as recognised qualifications.

The two following aspects however have a fundamental impact on the stages of the accreditation process:

- **Internal quality assurance systems (IQAS).** In compliance with the ESG, HEIs should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. For this reason, the universities now have IQAS that have been developed at either department/faculty or university level and these play a

key role in the processes connected with the quality assurance of programmes set out in the VSMA Framework.

- **The disciplinary scope of accredited academic programmes.** As described in the following sections, the approach given to accreditation will depend on the expertise of the audit team in the specific field of the programmes being evaluated.

The **faculty** (including affiliated faculties and schools) has become the organisational model for QA processes, as it serves as the focus around which a series of programmes of study with similar disciplinary fields is structured, and it is responsible for the implementation and running of the IQAS as regards programme delivery.

The ESG state that the form of external quality assurance varies from system to system and can include institutional evaluations of different types; subject or programme evaluations; accreditation at subject, programme and institutional levels; and combinations of these.

One should bear in mind that, as a starting point, the ESG are based on the spirit of the EUA's Graz Declaration (July 2003), which states that “the purpose of a European dimension to quality assurance is to promote mutual trust and improve transparency while respecting the diversity of national contexts and subject areas”.

AQU Catalunya therefore proposes that external audits be made simultaneously of all recognised academic programmes being offered by a faculty. The main objectives of this proposal are:

- The integration of programme review into institutional review.
- To provide an overview and reinforce the strategic vision of each faculty, by promoting coherence between First Cycle and postgraduate programmes and awards.
- To simplify external auditing and achieve economies of scale that reduce the cost of external audit.

This approach assumes that **external audit is, in terms of its scope, independent of accreditation**, which is applied at programme level, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. In this regard, the process takes into account the challenge of integrating into the audit the different levels of study of programmes being offered in the faculty (First Cycle and postgraduate), whilst also allowing for the subsequent issue of accreditation reports for each programme.

4. The accreditation timetable

The organisation and planning of the process need to take into account the evaluation of all recognised programmes for reaccreditation within the time limits laid down for academic governance in the prevailing regulations, namely, within six years of validation in the case of First Cycle programmes and doctoral/PhD degrees and four years for Second Cycle university programmes.

The approach adopted by AQU Catalunya, according to which it is the faculty that is audited, needs to ensure that, by the time of the accreditation of any recognised academic programme,

a site visit has been made to the faculty where the programme is delivered, in accordance with the legal requirements of Spanish legislation (Royal Decree 1393/2007).

AQU Catalunya, together with the universities and the Directorate General for Universities (DGU), accordingly agreed that the audit process should be based on the following criteria:

- **Number of faculties for audit in each academic year:** taking into account the number of faculties in all Catalan universities and the time limits set for programme reaccreditation, a total of twenty-five (25) faculties are to be externally audited each academic year.
- **A balance between the HEIs audited in each academic year:** the process has to be planned so that either all or most of the HEIs in the Catalan system of higher education are represented in the faculty audit process.
- **It should be proportionate to institutional volume:** the number of faculties in an HEI audited externally during an academic year must be proportional to the total number of faculties in the HEI to enable all of them to be audited within the set time limits.
- **Uniformity as regards the disciplines in each HEI:** mechanisms are to be established that allow for the external audit of faculties offering programmes in adjacent disciplines (extended audits) to be concentrated together.
- **Audit timetabling:** in accordance with the HEIs and the Directorate General for Universities, the annual timetable for the faculty site visits is to be established bearing in mind:
 - the time limits for programme reaccreditation, and
 - the number of programme monitoring reports for the faculty, as reviewed by AQU Catalunya.

5. External experts

One of the elements that contribute to ensuring the validity, reliability and usefulness of external review/audit processes is external experts (peer review). Reviews carried out by teams of external experts are based, on the one hand, on the discipline-related scientific and technical guidance provided by the experts and, on the other, the observation and direct study of the actual situation under review, which enables the information being analysed to be specified and contextualised. It can therefore be said that **the approach given to the accreditation will ultimately depend on the expert.**

The review processes set out in the VSMA Framework involves the participation of individual experts from the different fields of knowledge who make up the different review panels.

The required profile for members of the different review panels is described in *Guidelines for the development of the Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of*

recognised degree programmes and qualifications,⁹ which was endorsed by the AQU Board of Management at its meeting held on 2 December 2010.

AQU Catalunya maintains a permanent open call for applications from experts whereby they can register with the Agency's pool of reviewers through the website http://www.aqu.cat/experts/banc_avaluadors_en.html. In addition to the C.V. forms that also have to be sent when registering, the experts' section of the website includes an online course on quality assurance, together with a description of the regulatory framework, the Bologna Process and the university system in Catalonia.

External audit panels

In all accreditation procedures it is necessary for an external team of auditors to visit the HEI, with the subsequent visit report playing a key role in the final decision made by the accreditation panels. As mentioned above, AQU Catalunya believes that the site visit should simultaneously involve all recognised programmes being offered in the faculty.

The role of carrying out the external audit of a particular faculty lies with the external audit panels, the main function of which is to review the faculty's academic programmes and issue an external audit report.

An external audit panel is set up for each faculty that is to be evaluated, with the panel's composition taking into account the faculty's specific field of knowledge. The Agency then submits the list of members of the external audit panel to the HEI in order to clarify whether there is any conflict of interests for any panel member, in which case a change has to be made. The work of the external audit panel comes to an end when the external audit has been undertaken and the audit report issued.

The standard composition of an external audit panel is as follows:

- The **chairperson**.
- One **academic member** for each field of knowledge in the faculty.
- One **professional of recognised standing**.
- One **student** from the same field of knowledge as that of the faculty.
- One **secretary** who is a methodology specialist.

The composition of the audit panels may however vary according to the degree programmes in the faculty and the type of visit (extended audits). The external audit panels need to consist of a combination of accreditation panel members and other individuals appointed specifically by the panel.

The function of the audit panels is to carry out the external audit of the faculty, according to the process designed for accreditation. According to this process, the duties of the external audit panels are as follows:

⁹ <http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_27365192_1.pdf>

- Individual evaluation of the documentation (evidence) that has been prepared by the faculty for the external audit.
- Preliminary visit to the faculty by the audit panel's chairperson and secretary to plan the visit and, where applicable, resolve any queries and check specific aspects of the documentation that has been provided.
- To prepare the visit, in which the members of the external audit panel pool all of the information that has been analysed and identify the issues to be raised at the time of the site visit to the faculty.
- To carry out the visit to the faculty.
- Preparation of and agreement on the external audit report.

The outcome of these duties is an **external audit report** that the audit panel refers to the corresponding accreditation panel.

6. Accreditation audit panels

In the accreditation process, the special review panels set up under the VSMA Framework to individually deal with a specific subject area and be responsible for the validation, monitoring and modification of recognised programmes, take on the duties of audit panels. This ensures that the know-how acquired throughout the QA review processes is maintained and serves to reinforce the coherence of decisions made within the context of accreditation. Their main function is to issue the **audit reports** on programmes submitted for accreditation so that the corresponding bodies can make the definitive decision concerning accreditation.

In accordance with the agreement by AQU's Quality Assurance Commission (CAQ/*Comissió d'Avaluació de la Qualitat*) of 24 January 2011, whereby the special review panels in the VSMA Framework were set up, five permanent, or standing, panels were set up, each one covering one of the five main areas of knowledge: Arts and Humanities, Social and Legal Sciences, Experimental Sciences, Health Sciences, and Engineering and Architecture.

The accreditation panels that cover the respective subject areas are composed as follows:

- The **chairperson**, who is appointed by the CAQ chair from candidates of recognised academic standing. The chairperson of the corresponding special review panel must be a CAQ member.
- At least one **academic** for each subject in the area of knowledge, who is appointed by the CAQ chair from university-level academic candidates.
- At least one **person of recognised professional standing**, who is appointed by the CAQ chair.
- At least one **student** from the same field of knowledge as the special review panel, who is appointed by the CAQ chair.
- A **secretary**, who is a methodology specialist and takes part in an advisory capacity, is appointed by the CAQ chair and must be an expert from AQU Catalunya.

The accreditation panels may include an **ad hoc auditor** or university-level academic specialising in the fields of knowledge that are insufficiently covered by the panel's academic members.

The profile of the members of the accreditation panels and the assessment and selection criteria are also described in *Guidelines for the development of the Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degree programmes and qualifications*.

7. The appeals body

The CAQ is the body responsible for reviewing decisions in appeals lodged in relation to the accreditation of university programmes. A key role in the review of decisions is played by the chairpersons of the special review panel, with the sole exclusion of the chairperson of the panel that issued the report against which an appeal is lodged.

8. The accreditation procedure

The carrying out of an external audit is a *sine qua non* for the accreditation of recognised university degree programmes pursuant to current Spanish legal provisions (Royal Decree 1393/2007). The main stages of the accreditation process are as follows:

- 1) **Selection of faculties for external audit.** The AQU Board of Management annually approves the faculties that are to undergo external audit in the following academic year, according to the programmes that have to be accredited. Alternatively, the Board of Management can approve a six-year plan that is reviewable annually. The proposal is drawn up jointly between the universities and AQU Catalunya.
- 2) **Planning of the site visit.** The dates for the site visit to each faculty is planned jointly by AQU Catalunya and the universities. The plan should be approved by either the end of the academic year prior to the one in which the visit is to be made or right at the beginning of the corresponding academic year.
- 3) **Applying for accreditation.** The HEI has to formally apply for the accreditation of its recognised programmes and awards, which must be in accordance with the criteria and time limits established in the prevailing regulations by the Catalan government (Generalitat de Catalunya). Each faculty's application should contain, at the very least, the names of the programmes to be accredited, the year they were introduced and the academic coordinator, who acts as interlocutor between the faculty and the audit panel.
- 4) **Acceptance of the application.** Applications that comply with the prerequisites shall be accepted by the administrative authority. If this is not the case, the HEI will be asked to make any relevant changes within ten working days. Once it has been accepted, it is then referred to AQU Catalunya.
- 5) **Documentation to be submitted. Three months** prior to the visit by the external audit panel to the faculty, the HEI must either submit or make available on its website the following documentation:

- a. **The faculty self-assessment report.** The faculty self-assessment report **integrates and replaces the final monitoring reports** of the programmes that are to undergo accreditation. The most significant aspects of each programme offered in the faculty are therefore kept separate in the self-assessment report. It should also contain an appropriately updated copy of the faculty or programme enhancement plan.
- b. **A sample of student tests and coursework.** A selection of evidence will need to be prepared of the student achievement tests within the framework of the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree), external work experience/placement and other selected courses. The selection of written tests, assignments and/or reports will need to cover the spectrum of qualifications.
- c. **Other evidence.** Other evidence in support of the delivery of the curriculum may be submitted. In particular, the evidence set out in section three of this guide, which is not available from any other sources, will need to be submitted.

AQU Catalunya will also make the following documentation available to the external audit panel:

- All of the programme and university monitoring reports.
 - The latest monitoring report if already referred to AQU Catalunya.
 - The programme assessment reports produced by AQU Catalunya.
 - The programme indicators through WINDDAT.
 - The design of the internal quality assurance system (IQAS).
 - The validated programme specifications and all approved modifications.
- 6) **Analysis of the evidence.** The objective here is to identify the strengths and areas for improvement through the application of the standards and criteria given in this guide, and to establish the issues that need to be clarified prior to the site visit and the most important aspects to be dealt with during the visit. The focus of this evaluation is the enhancement plan, which is included in the monitoring report for the programme's accreditation and, where applicable, any modifications incorporated as a result of the plan.

The auditors are to use the provided rubric table, with appropriate examples. The evaluation of the standards in relation to the IQAS, the relevance of the public information, the adequacy of the teaching staff and the effectiveness of learning support is to be carried out at faculty level. In the case of the standards corresponding to the programme outcomes and the quality of the programme design, the evaluation is carried out at programme level, with use being made of the appropriate headings and examples to justify the various aspects.

- 7) **Preliminary analysis.** On the basis of the evidence provided, a preliminary analysis report is drawn up, together with a document that sets out the main issues to be dealt with during the preliminary visit. This document is to be referred to the faculty one week

prior to the preliminary visit in order for the HEI to have sufficient time to prepare, where applicable, the supporting evidence or information required.

- 8) **Preliminary visit. Six weeks** after the documentation has been submitted (point 5), the chairperson and secretary of the audit panel visit the faculty in order to **resolve any queries raised by the external audit panel** and to receive a briefing on the faculty, with an explanation of its main features, the relationship with the HEI and areas for enhancement and strengths. Agreement is also reached on the stakeholder groups that are to be interviewed in the focus groups. The faculty should be represented by two people, preferably the head of faculty and another person who has been involved in monitoring and/or the running of the IQAS. A decision has to be made during the preliminary visit as to whether the external audit should continue or if, in view of the evidence provided, it should be postponed.
- 9) **Organisation of the visit.** Following on from the preliminary visit, the faculty organises the timetable for the visit, which defines the various previously agreed focus groups that are to be held (teaching staff, students and graduates, support staff members/administration and services, employers, programme coordinators, management team, QA team, etc.) and the visit to the facilities. Space and facilities will also need to be set aside for the work of the external audit panel.
- 10) **The actual visit.** The main objective is to verify the delivery *in situ* of the programmes run in the faculty. The evidence provided has to be checked and verified, any controversies or disagreements detected and, if necessary, new evidence obtained so that any aspects not considered in the documentation provided can be assessed. The length of the visit will depend on the number of programmes to be audited and their status. **Two days** is considered to be the average time for most faculties.
- 11) **Preliminary audit report.** Within a maximum period of **six weeks** following the visit, the audit panel refers the report, via AQU Catalunya, to the HEI. The headings given in section IV are to be used for drawing up the report. For programmes that are special cases and need to be assessed in a different way to the faculty's other programmes, evidence justifying assessment is to be provided on a case-by-case basis. Good practices and any critical aspects should be clearly indicated in the report.
- 12) **Supporting arguments/representations regarding the external visit report.** The HEI may, within a maximum of **twenty days**, present any supporting arguments or representations regarding the preliminary report for consideration by the external audit panel.
- 13) **Final report on the site visit.** Once it has received any supporting arguments or representations, the external audit panel has a maximum of twenty days to draw up and issue the definitive external audit report.
- 14) **Analysis of the documentation for accreditation.** In their process of decision-making regarding accreditation, the accreditation panels shall take into account the external audit reports and any other relevant documentation that has been produced since the time of programme validation.

- 15) **Issuance of the preliminary report.** The accreditation panels draw up the corresponding accreditation report following verification of the programme's delivery and consideration of the abovementioned documentation. The report is issued in terms of either favourable or unfavourable, with details of any aspects that need to be corrected in order for a favourable report to be issued.
- 16) **Supporting arguments/representations regarding the accreditation report.** The HEI has twenty (20) calendar days to correct the aspects identified in the preliminary report.
- 17) **Issuance of the accreditation report.** Once any supporting arguments or representations have been assessed, the accreditation panels issue the definitive accreditation report. The outcome of the accreditation is to be expressed in terms of either favourable or unfavourable, according to four levels:
- a. **Accreditation on track to excellence.**¹⁰ Compliance to a high level with the majority of the accreditation criteria, with numerous good practices that exceed the minimum level required.
 - b. **Accreditation.** At least all of the minimum accreditation criteria have been met.
 - c. **Accreditation with prescriptions.** Not all of the accreditation criteria have been met. Problems that have been detected can be resolved within a reasonable period of time.
 - d. **Accreditation withheld.** The majority of the accreditation criteria have not been met.

If the accreditation report indicates that improvements are necessary (case *c*), the time limit for these to be implemented is agreed between the faculty and the programme coordinators, which **shall in no case exceed two** years. Once this time limit has expired, the faculty must present the evidence justifying the implementation of the necessary measures, together with the monitoring report.

All programmes/faculties will need to establish an enhancement plan, regardless of the outcome of the accreditation process, in accordance with their IQAS, which provides for the continuous enhancement of study programmes. **Programme accreditation validates the incorporation of modifications to curricula if they are included in the enhancement plan that is presented.** These changes to the programme specification correspond to those that, according to the document *Processes for communicating*

¹⁰ *Accreditation on track to excellence* means that the programme complies with the majority of the accreditation standards in terms of the level of quality. In this regard, the term *excellence* is used within the specific context of quality assurance described in this guide, with the aim of identifying good practices for action by programmes and/or HEIs. The concept of excellence therefore differs from that used in other international contexts.

Programmes that obtain "accreditation on track to excellence" serve as an exemplary model for other programmes and HEIs. Nevertheless, work will need to continue on the continuous enhancement of the study programmes at either programme and/or HEI level.

*and/or the assessment of modifications made to university First Cycle and Second Cycle degrees, should be disclosed through the modification process. **Any substantial change that implies the need for programme revalidation will not be validated.***

The **accreditation report** is to be issued within a maximum of **six months from the date of the application for accreditation**. If this is not the case, it shall be implied that the degree is accredited.

- 18) **Notification of accreditation.** AQU Catalunya has to inform the Catalan government authorities (Generalitat de Catalunya), the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) and the Spanish Council of Universities (Consejo de Universidades/CU) of the outcome of accreditation. The CU then issues the corresponding resolution and decision, in relation to which the HEI may lodge an **appeal within a maximum of one month**.
- 19) **Register.** After the definitive decision has been issued, it is referred by the MECD to the Spanish Register of Higher Education Institutions, Faculties and Degrees (RUCT) and if the decision is favourable, the corresponding renewal of accreditation (reaccreditation) is registered. If it is unfavourable, the degree will figure in the Register as having been terminated as of a given date. In this case, the resolution shall state that the curriculum has been terminated and appropriate measures will need to be taken to guarantee the academic rights of students who are currently taking these studies.

AQU Catalunya recognises evaluations for the renewal of Erasmus Mundus programmes issued by the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). For recognition, the HEI must provide the EACEA renewal's documentation at the time of accreditation.

AQU Catalunya may also recognise other forms of international accreditation obtained by study programmes, which will be exempt from undergoing accreditation. In order to be eligible for this option, firstly, programmes must have obtained a positive evaluation and, secondly, the objectives set for both the international evaluation and the AQU accreditation process should be closely aligned.

9. The self-assessment report

The processes and procedures associated with the quality assurance of courses leading to higher awards are described in each HEI's internal quality assurance system. The IQAS is therefore a fundamental instrument for programme accreditation and as such should be seen as the cornerstone in the process of producing the self-assessment report.

More specifically, the IQAS describes the processes and procedures to be followed to achieve the objective of accreditation. The IQAS is therefore the main source of the information necessary for accreditation. The HEI has to follow the procedures defined in the IQAS to be able to assure the quality of the internal process, and the self-assessment report contains evidence of how well this works.

In order to guarantee the quality of the process, the self-assessment report should comply, amongst other things, with the following requirements. It should be:

- Complete, rigorous and specific. The report should include an analysis and assessment of what are considered the key elements for the particular context being analysed and for enhancement.
- Based on evidence produced in the monitoring process and new evidence from the study programmes (for example, student achievements).
- Systematic and detailed in the analysis of the causes and consequently whatever is necessary to carry through the improvements and enhancements.
- Balanced, in terms of both the positive aspects and aspects to be improved or enhanced.
- Shared and validated by the university community in order to ensure its representation in the analysis. The self-assessment report should be made public and approved according to the procedures laid down in the IQAS.

The various stages in producing the self-assessment report

Setting up the self-assessment team

The unit being assessed, in accordance with the IQAS, has to set up the faculty's team that is responsible for producing the self-assessment report. The team will need to consist of representatives from the faculty's various stakeholders, such as academic/programme coordinators, teaching staff, administrative staff, students and any others considered appropriate.

If the team in charge of producing the self-assessment report is different to the one in charge of the monitoring reports, it is advisable for the members to receive an *ad hoc* training, in which the key aspects to be analysed according to the methodology used are expanded on.

Systematic data collection

Producing a self-assessment report is not a process that is built from scratch (*ex novo*).

As mentioned above, it is the culmination of the monitoring process. By following the procedures set out in the IQAS, the self-assessment team therefore needs to aggregate the information gathered in previous monitoring reports and add the most recent data and figures corresponding to the last academic year. Aggregation will include the data and analyses of both the faculty and the programmes delivered in the faculty. The information can be either quantitative or qualitative, and range from administrative data and input indicators to processes and the outcomes of activities in the faculty.

As regards programme delivery, the information in the self-assessment report should cover the period from validation to the time of the accreditation audit visit.

Drawing up of the self-assessment report

Once all of the information is available, the self-assessment team will need to thoroughly analyse and discuss the data and figures in order to meet the accreditation standards and establish the basis for a good enhancement plan.

Public information of the self-assessment report

The HEI shall make the self-assessment report publicly available so it can be validated by the university community.

Final validation and referral to AQU Catalunya

Lastly, the self-assessment report has to be validated by the HEI's corresponding body before being referred to AQU Catalunya.

Contents of the self-assessment report

The self-assessment report must meet the standards for accreditation defined in this guide. It is to be set out according to the following main sections:

1. Presentation of the faculty

In this section the HEI needs to provide the reader with an overview of the faculty. This can include data and figures on significant achievements in the faculty, such as the increase in the number of students and graduates, teaching staff and type of staff, etc.

2. The process of producing the self-assessment report

A brief description is necessary of the production and drawing up the self-assessment report, mentioning the setting up of the team in charge of this, the systematic aggregation of the data, the participation of the stakeholders, the inquiry stage and the final analysis and discussion, including an assessment of the quality of the way in which the self-assessment report was produced (in terms of deadlines, involvement of the stakeholders, quality of the evidence, degree of satisfaction, etc.).

3. Assessment of compliance with the accreditation standards

In this section the HEI has to provide evidence-based reasoning for the degree to which the accreditation standards have been met.

For each faculty and programme, depending on the standard in question, the HEI has to make an assessment through direct reference to the most significant data that demonstrate compliance with the standards. In each case, this means an assessment of the degree to which the desired outcomes and the programme specification have been fulfilled (for example, if the desired learning outcomes have been achieved, if agreements concerning staff resources have been complied with, compliance of programme delivery as planned or if modifications need to be made, etc.).



Specific considerations to be taken into account in the preparation of the self-assessment report:

- *Compliance with Standard 1 is direct if the information on the curriculum is maintained up to date using scheduled processes.*
- *Standards 2, 3, 4 and 5 are mainly developed at faculty level and standard 6 at programme level. For faculty-level standards, an overall analysis is required and, where appropriate, note made of the particular characteristics and issues associated with the different degree programmes. Standard 6 corresponds basically to the contents of section three of each programme's monitoring report.*

4. Assessment and proposal of the quality enhancement plan

The HEI will need to analyse and reflect on the running of the faculty and programme delivery. This food for thought should be based on the public information as well as the data, indicators and qualitative information obtained from the IQAS.

Following on from the evaluative analysis, proposals for quality enhancement are made that will need to be integrated into the faculty's quality enhancement plan, which should include quality enhancements across the entire faculty and others that are specific to degree programmes requiring improvements.

Any implied modification of a programme resulting from proposals for quality enhancements shall be validated by the accreditation process in the case where a favourable report is obtained. When the HEI subsequently incorporates any such modification into the programme specification by the set standard procedure, the favourable report will thereby be automatically issued by AQU Catalunya.

5. Evidence

The evidence to be attached to or enclosed with the self-assessment report is given in this guide under each standard, and it will need to be available and accessible to the members of the external audit panel.

A self-assessment report template is available to HEIs from AQU Catalunya for compiling the information corresponding to these five sections.

III. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

1. Programme quality

The interests of society in the quality and standards of study programmes in higher education requires the setting up of an established qualifications framework endorsed by the ministers responsible for higher education in the EHEA, which also allows for mutual recognition between the member states. It is within this context that the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (QF-EHEA in Spain/MECES) has been developed in alignment with the European Framework constructed on the basis of the so-called Dublin descriptors.

This framework is valid for HEIs and entities responsible for the external quality assurance of degree programmes. It should also promote a shared understanding of the expectations associated with qualifications that allows for the consistent use of degrees awarded and facilitates the international mobility of graduates.

HEIs must have processes in their IQAS for programme design and approval that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA, in particular ESG 1.2 (Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards), which recommends that “institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards” (ENQA, 2005). Programme design and approval must ensure that the structure of a programme curriculum is satisfactory, that the series of modules or subjects in the curriculum is consistent with the programme competences, and that the academic content is current depending on the discipline and the level of programme.

The competence profile should be relevant within the scope of the discipline. The proposed competences should correspond with those of national and international networks and entities. The justification for or assessment of the relevance of the proposed profile for the programme is more important in the case of programmes that are either new or not traditional in the Catalan university system. Furthermore, the competence profile has to correspond with the level of studies for the proposal, in line with the QF-EHEA in Spain (in the present context, either First or Second Cycle studies). In the case of study programmes that qualify for performing a regulated professional activity in Spain, the general competences will also need to conform to those laid down in the legal regulations.

At the time of the accreditation it is consequently expected that the HEI comply with the following standard:

The programme's design (competence profile and structure of the curriculum) is current according to the requirements of the discipline and it meets the required levels of studies according to the QF-EHEA in Spain.



Compliance with this standard is automatic following the programme's initial validation, and it will therefore not be subject to evaluation during the focus groups.

The overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 1.1. The programme's competence profile meets the requirements of the discipline and complies with the required levels of studies according to the QF-EHEA in Spain.
- 1.2. The curriculum and structure of the curriculum are consistent with the competence profile and programme learning outcomes.
- 1.3. Students who are admitted have an admission profile that is suitable for the programme and the number of students is consistent with the number of places offered.
- 1.4. The existence of effective teaching coordination mechanisms for the programme.
- 1.5. The different regulations are complied with correctly and this has a positive impact on the programme outcomes.

Evidence¹¹

- Up-to-date programme specification for the validation of the degree programme (AQU Catalunya).
- Programme validation report (AQU Catalunya).

Level of compliance with the standards

The standards have basically just one rating, namely, “**Conferral**” although in cases where programme validation has proved to be highly satisfactory the term “**Quality conferral**” may be applied.

¹¹ In brackets, the body/institution providing the evidence.

2. Relevance of the public information

Information transparency is the key to building trust in, and increasing competitiveness based on, the quality of university education, and is why it appears in one way or another in all of the declarations and communiqués of the ministers responsible for higher education in the EHEA, as reflected in, amongst others, the communiqués of the ministerial conferences in Bergen and London:

“Building on the achievements so far in the Bologna Process, we wish to establish a European Higher Education Area based on the principles of quality and transparency”, Bergen Communiqué, 19-20 May 2005.

“Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.” London Communiqué, 18 May 2007.

The importance of transparency is evident throughout the European standards defined by ENQA, in which reference is made to access to the information on programmes by the different stakeholder groups (ENQA, 2005). This accreditation standard aims to encompass this important role of the public information associated with the study programme.

In accordance with ESG 1.7 (Public information), “Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering”. This information should be public and easily accessible to all of society and it should include information on the delivery of the study programme and the programme outcomes. On the other hand, ESG 1.1 (Policy and procedures for quality assurance) establishes that “[...] the strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available”. The HEI should therefore also provide information on the IQAS and in particular the monitoring and accreditation of the study programme.

The publication of information ensures transparency and facilitates accountability, in line with the European guidelines for quality assurance higher education. More specifically, with regard to ESG 1.6 (Information systems), “institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities”.

In order to quality assure public information, HEIs will need to periodically reflect on the validity, relevance and currency of their public information, its accessibility and the processes of continuous enhancement that assure its quality.

In this context the programme must comply with the following standard:

The institution appropriately informs all stakeholders of the programme's characteristics and the management processes for quality assurance.



Programme monitoring, as defined in the VSMA Framework, helps to demonstrate compliance with this standard in the sections on “Public information on programme delivery” and “Public information on course indicators”.

The overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 2.1. The HEI publishes reliable, complete and up to date information on the programme's characteristics, its delivery and outcomes.
- 2.2. The HEI ensures that relevant information on the programme is readily accessible to all stakeholders, and includes the outcomes of programme monitoring and, where applicable, accreditation.
- 2.3. The HEI publishes the programme's IQAS.

Evidence

- The website of either the HEI or the programme (HEI).
- Programme monitoring reports (AQU Catalunya).
- Documentation connected with IQAS processes dealing with public information, the compilation of information and accountability (HEI).

Level of compliance with the standards

These standards are assessed according to four levels of achievement:

- **Quality-level compliance.** Full compliance with the standard and in addition there are examples of good practices that exceed the minimum level required.
- **Compliant.** Full compliance with the standard.
- **Compliant with conditions.** Compliance with the minimum level for the standard, and aspects have been identified that will need to be improved. The nature of these aspects is such that they can be improved within a reasonable period of time.
- **Non-compliant.** Non-compliance with the minimum level for the standard. Improvements that need to be introduced are such that the standard cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time.

Issues for the interviews

Management team / HEI's quality unit team

- Suitability of the information available to the students.
- Sustainability of the compilation and publication of information.
- Level of dependence on the HEI's centralised information systems.

Students

- Quality of the available pre-registration academic information: information for making decisions.
- Administrative information available on registration, student transcript transfers, etc.
- Level of knowledge and understanding about the general programme outcomes and the programme's graduate learning outcomes.
- Level of information on external work experience/placement.
- Level of information on the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).
- Level of information on mobility.
- Degree of participation in defining and improving the public information.
- Satisfaction with the internal information systems.
- Satisfaction with the public information.

Graduates

- Level of information throughout the programme (for example, admission, delivery of the programme, external work experience/placement, final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree), mobility, outcomes).
- Satisfaction with the public information.

Employers

- Usefulness of the available public information in graduate recruitment.

Teaching staff

- Suitability of the available academic information during the different stages of the teaching and learning process.
- Satisfaction with the internal information systems.
- Access to the institution's IQAS.

3. Efficacy of the programme's internal quality assurance system

Consistent with the trust placed by society in autonomous management in the universities and the transparency called for within the framework of the EHEA, HEIs should ensure that their actions are appropriately guided to achieve the objectives associated with the programmes and courses that they deliver. HEIs consequently need policies and internal quality assurance systems that have a formal status and are publicly available. The IQAS is therefore a key instrument for defining the faculty's teaching activities.

The design and implementation of the IQAS must comply with the European standards and guidelines (ESG) for the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions, in particular ESG 1.1 (Policy and procedures for quality assurance) and 1.2 (Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards) (ENQA, 2005). As stated in ESG 1.1, "Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture that recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders", while ESG 1.2 recommends that "Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards". In addition, this definition was accordingly included in Royal Decree 1393/2007, according to which the academic governance of recognised university degree courses in Spain was established, which in turn was amended by Royal Decree 861/2010 whereby HEIs should ensure that their actions lead to the achievement of the outcomes associated with their programmes and awards.

At the time of programme accreditation, it is expected that the HEI already has a formally established and sufficiently implemented IQAS, which assures the quality of the programmes that it covers and consequently defines the processes for the design, approval, implementation, monitoring, revision and improvement and, finally, accreditation of its programmes of study. At this point in time, which is associated with external quality assurance of higher education, it must also comply with ESG 2.1 (Use of internal quality assurance procedures), which states that "external quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines" (ENQA, 2005).

At the time of programme accreditation, the HEI is therefore expected to comply with the following standard:

The HEI has a functioning internal quality assurance system that has a formal status and assures the quality and continuous enhancement of the programme in an efficient way.



The efficacy of the IQAS ultimately becomes clear when the IQAS itself fulfils the prerequisites to accredit satisfactory programme delivery.

This overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 3.1. The functioning IQAS facilitates programme design and approval.
- 3.2. The functioning IQAS ensures the compilation of information and relevant outcomes for efficient programme management, in particular learning outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.
- 3.3. The functioning IQAS facilitates programme monitoring and, where applicable, modification, and it ensures continuous enhancement of programme quality through the analysis of objective data.
- 3.4. The functioning IQAS facilitates the process of programme accreditation and ensures it is carried out satisfactorily.
- 3.5. The functioning IQAS is periodically revised and its fitness for purpose analysed and, where appropriate, a quality enhancement plan drawn up and presented for optimisation purposes.

An institution's IQAS will also need to be based on a model of continuous improvement. The HEI will need to periodically assess the IQAS's fitness for purpose as the key instrument for the quality assurance and continuous improvement of its programmes. The IQAS's efficacy can be seen from the degree to which its processes are implemented and the analysis of the evidence produced through its application, such as the programme monitoring reports, the IQAS revision reports and the documentation necessary for accreditation, amongst other things.

Evidence

- **IQAS documentation (HEI):**
 - **Programme design and approval.** This IQAS process should contribute in particular to the analysis of compliance with standard 1.1.
 - **Programme monitoring.** This IQAS process should contribute in particular to the analysis of compliance with standards 1.2 and 1.3.

- **IQAS revision.** Both this IQAS process and the reports produced as a result of its implementation should contribute in particular to the analysis of compliance with the standard 1.5.
- **Programme accreditation.** The existence of a process in the IQAS connected with the programme's accreditation, which results in the pre-accreditation monitoring report and a self-assessment report, should provide for an assessment of compliance with standard 1.4.
- **Monitoring reports (AQU Catalunya):**
 - Indicator performance table (the programme's overall descriptors, learning outcomes, stakeholder satisfaction).
 - Plans for, and the monitoring of, programme enhancement.

Within all of the information included in the annual monitoring reports, the examination of the indicator performance tables and enhancement plans should contribute in particular to the analysis of compliance with standards 1.2 and 1.3. This information will also be key when it comes to other dimensions of the accreditation, in particular the one associated with standard 6 (Quality of programme outcomes).

- **Instruments for the compilation of information on stakeholder satisfaction (HEI/AQU Catalunya):**

The compilation and analysis of stakeholder feedback and monitoring of stakeholder satisfaction (in particular that of students) is important in the assessment of the level of compliance with all the specific standards.



The HEI can complete this list of evidence with any documents it considers appropriate for the focus groups, such as informed opinions by the different stakeholders.

Level of compliance with the standards

These standards are assessed according to four levels of achievement:

- **Quality-level compliance.** The standard is fully achieved and in addition there are examples of good practices that exceed the minimum level required.
- **Compliant.** The standard is fully achieved at the HEI.
- **Compliant with conditions.** The minimum level for the standard is achieved and aspects identified that will need to be improved. The nature of these aspects is such that they can be improved within a reasonable period of time.
- **Non-compliant.** The minimum level require for the corresponding standard is not achieved by the programme. Improvements that need to be introduced are such that the standard cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time.

Matters for the focus groups



The focus group arrangements can be established in a visit to the HEI prior to the site visit for the actual accreditation. The relevance of certain stakeholders (for example, graduates, employers, etc.) being present may depend on the quality of the recorded evidence.

Team responsible for the programme / HEI's quality assurance team

- Impact of the IQAS on programme quality in the faculty.
- Efficacy of the IQAS processes for programme monitoring and enhancement.
- Efficacy of the IQAS processes for programme accreditation.
- Justification of the criteria for prioritising programme enhancements.
- Degree of stakeholder participation in programme monitoring and accreditation, and revision of the IQAS.
- Degree of coordination between the faculty's IQAS and the university's IQAS.

Students and graduates

- Level of participation in the analysis, defining and revision of programme enhancement measures/corrective actions: relationship between enhancement measures and programme satisfaction among graduates.

Teaching staff

- Level of participation in the analysis, defining and revision of programme enhancement measures: relationship between enhancement measures and programme satisfaction among teachers.
- Assessment of the programme's team leadership involving the implementation of enhancement measures.
- Degree of knowledge about the IQAS and participation in the defining, implementation and revision of the processes.
- Impact of the IQAS on programme quality in the faculty.

4. The suitability to teach of staff on the programme

Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching and the necessary skills and experience appropriate to the programme outcomes, and that they are sufficient in terms of numbers and assignment to cover the main academic duties. Assuring the quality and suitability of the teaching staff complies directly with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and more specifically ESG 1.4 (Quality assurance of teaching staff), which recommends that “institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports” (ENQA, 2005).

At the time of the accreditation of a programme, the HEI is therefore expected to comply with the following standard:

Staff involved in teaching in the faculty are both sufficient and suitable, in accordance with the characteristics of the programmes and the number of students.



The fact that the faculty is used as an overall unit of reference for the programmes that it delivers shall not restrict the accreditation panel from checking the compliance of specific programmes in the faculty with this standard.

The analysis of compliance with this standard takes in **all faculty staff involved in teaching programmes in the faculty**, with particular attention being paid to three types:

- **First Cycle degree year-one teachers**, due to the implications that the first year (year one) has on ensuring the successful transition from secondary to university education (persistence, year-one drop-outs, academic integration, etc.). The assessment of this type of teaching staff will be of particular importance in degree programmes with high numbers of student enrolment (different groups and shifts) and a highly diverse profile for the teaching staff in the faculty.
- **Teachers of First Cycle degree final-year projects and compulsory external work experience/placement**, given that it is in these parts of the curriculum where the research and/or professional experience of the teaching staff who are supervising and assessing student achievement stands out.
- **Second Cycle degree teachers**, to check that the requirements of academic level, research potential and professional training are appropriate to this level of study.

This overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 4.1. The teaching staff meet the qualifications requirements for programme delivery in the faculty, and they have sufficient and recognised teaching, research and, where applicable, professional experience.
- 4.2. There are sufficient teaching staff in the faculty, and staff assignment is adequate for them to carry out their duties and attend the students.
- 4.3. The HEI offers support and opportunities for enhancing teaching quality in the faculty.

Evidence

On the adequacy and sufficient number of teaching staff

- Percentage of PhD holders, those who are accredited and according to permanent/contract staff (AQU Catalunya/HEI).
- Delivery of the curriculum during the academic year corresponding to the external site visit: assignment of teaching staff and subject area (HEI).
- Teaching experience: the number of five-year teaching-based salary raises obtained within the framework of the DOCENTIA programme (AQU Catalunya).
- Research experience: the number of six-year research quality premiums (AQU Catalunya).
- Professional experience: duties, time, field/scope (HEI).
- Research experience of teaching staff involved in Second Cycle degrees: research projects, etc. (HEI).
- Student satisfaction indicators (HEI/AQU Catalunya).

On support for teaching staff

- The evidence on this point will basically come from the focus group with the teaching staff. If a training plan exists, it can be presented or any other appropriate document (for example, IQAS documents connected with the quality assurance of teaching staff, human resource policies, etc.).

Level of compliance with the standards

These standards are assessed according to four levels of achievement:

- **Quality-level compliance. The standard is fully achieved and in addition there are examples of good practices that exceed the minimum level required.**
- **Compliant. The standard is fully achieved at the HEI.**
- **Compliant with conditions. The minimum level for the standard is achieved and aspects identified that will need to be improved. The nature of these aspects is such that they can be improved within a reasonable period of time.**

- **Non-compliant. The minimum level require for the corresponding standard is not achieved by the programme. Improvements that need to be introduced are such that the standard cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time.**

Issues for the focus groups

Management team

- Criteria for the assignment of teaching staff in year one of the programme.
- Criteria for the assignment of teaching staff in First Cycle degree final-year projects and compulsory external work experience/placement.
- Teaching coordination (organisation, functioning, etc.).
- Satisfaction with institutional support.
- Academic staff planning and policy.

Teaching staff

- Criteria for the assignment of teaching staff in year one of the programme.
- Criteria for the assignment of teaching staff in First Cycle degree final-year projects and compulsory external work experience/placement.
- Teaching coordination (organisation, functioning, etc.).
- Satisfaction with institutional support.

Students and graduates

- Satisfaction with the teaching staff.

5. Efficiency of learning support systems

In addition to the teaching staff, HEIs make a series of services and resources available to students to motivate, facilitate and enhance learning, regardless of location (on campus, distance learning, etc.). In this regard, ESG 1.5 (Learning resources and student support) recommends “Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offer” (ENQA, 2005).

At the time of the accreditation of a programme, the HEI is therefore expected to comply with the following standard:

The HEI has adequate and efficient guidance services and resources for student learning.

This section refers to all of the services and resources that support student learning. The scope of this section includes:

- **Services**, mainly academic and professional guidance. Students face different academic problems throughout their time at university (such as course selection and learning issues) and have special needs (accommodation and careers guidance, for example). The HEI should have appropriate means to lead and guide in such matters.
- **Physical resources**, such as facilities (classrooms, study rooms, computer labs, laboratories, libraries, etc.); technological infrastructure; scientific, technical, assistive and artistic equipment and material, of varying significance depending on the type of course:
 - **Library services** or learning resource centres.
 - **Specialised facilities** (laboratories, etc.). Compliance with the appropriate equipment for the delivery of practical classroom activities in the curriculum is checked in laboratories and other teaching facilities.
 - **Technological infrastructure**. Only in faculties where there are semi-distance learning programmes.

Note

In addition to the physical resources and services, another aspect to be taken into consideration in this section is the **technical support staff**. It was decided not to include this staff in this first edition of the Guide in order to simplify the process. Their possible inclusion has been deferred to subsequent editions.

Note

Semi-distance learning

For semi-distance learning courses the analysis and assessment of the following aspects is of particular importance:

- The structure and potential of the virtual learning environment and tools used for the development of teaching and learning.
- The design of materials for the development of teaching and learning.
- Tutorship and the assessment of student tests and performance.

e-learning

The abovementioned aspects are even more important in e-learning HEIs, in addition to the following:

- The fitness of purpose of the teaching methodology and resources for the type of studies.
- The fitness of purpose of learning activities for distance learning courses.
- Guidance, tutorial and advice systems.
- Interpersonal communication systems.



This section will be more time-consuming in the following circumstances: faculties that do not form part of the consortium of university libraries in Catalonia (CBUC/Consorti de Biblioteques Universitàries de Catalunya), Second Cycle degrees (as they may require the continuous upgrading of their resources) and programmes recently introduced in the HEI.

This overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 5.1. The academic guidance services provide adequate support for the learning process, and the professional guidance services facilitate entry into the labour market.
- 5.2. The available physical resources are adequate for the number of students and the characteristics of the programme.

Evidence

On the services

- Tutorial action plan, with a distinction being made, if applicable, between tutorial activities for new-entry students and students already enrolled (HEI).
- Institutional action plan to facilitate graduate employment and destinations (HEI).
- Satisfaction indicators on academic tutoring (HEI/AQU Catalunya).
- Satisfaction indicators on professional and careers guidance (HEI/AQU Catalunya).
- IQAS documentation on student support and guidance (HEI).

On the physical resources

The site visit to the facilities is a key source of evidence of the physical resources, as well as the use and satisfaction indicators and the opinions provided in the focus groups. The IQAS documentation on the quality assurance of the physical resources can also be referred to.

Depending on the nature of the programme or if it is new, the external audit panel may request specific information on these resources either prior to or during the visit.

- **Library services /learning resource centres (HEI):**

Faculties that belong to the CBUC	Faculties that do not belong to the CBUC
Use and satisfaction indicators	Documentary sources connected with the programme: assessment of whether they are sufficient and up to date Accessibility of the documentary resources Assessment of the library facilities Use and satisfaction indicators

- **Specialised facilities** (laboratories, etc.):

Student satisfaction indicators (HEI/AQU Catalunya).



The programme coordinators are encouraged to provide evidence – where this is available and easily accessible – on the physical resources considered to be of particular significance.

Level of compliance with the standards

These standards are assessed according to four levels of achievement:

- **Quality-level compliance.** The standard is fully achieved and in addition there are examples of good practices that exceed the minimum level required.
- **Compliant.** The standard is fully achieved at the HEI.
- **Compliant with conditions.** The minimum level for the standard is achieved and aspects identified that will need to be improved. The nature of these aspects is such that they can be improved within a reasonable period of time.
- **Non-compliant.** The minimum level require for the corresponding standard is not achieved by the programme. Improvements that need to be introduced are such that the standard cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time.

Issues for the focus groups

The faculty's management team

- Quality of the library service collections.
- Satisfaction with the library services: accessibility of resources, facility assessment.
- Satisfaction with the teaching facilities: rate of occupancy, equipment, upgrading, and maintenance.
- Infrastructure and equipment plans.
- Assessment of the tutorial action plan.
- Assessment of physical resources and guidance services-related processes.

Teaching staff

- Quality of the library service collections.
- Satisfaction with the teaching facilities: rate of occupancy, equipment, upgrading, and maintenance.
- Assessment of the tutorial action plan.
- Assessment of physical resources and guidance services-related processes.

Students and graduates

- Quality of the library service collections.
- Satisfaction with the library services: accessibility of resources, facility assessment.
- Satisfaction with the teaching facilities: rate of occupancy, equipment, upgrading, and maintenance.
- Assessment of the tutorial action plan.
- Assessment of the professional and careers guidance services.

6. Quality of programme (learning) outcomes

The programme outcomes need to be enumerated and analysed for programme review and enhancement. "Programme learning outcomes" means not only the outcomes of learning, but also graduate labour market outcomes (graduate destinations) and stakeholder satisfaction.

Programme outcomes are what students are expected to be capable of demonstrating on completion of their studies. They define and give identity to the programme. The entire teaching and learning process and a large part of the organisation's resources are directed at the objective of achieving the intended learning outcomes. The degree itself is certification of this achievement. In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed in external review on the learning outcomes and less on the actual processes leading to their achievement. The causes of this change lie both in the fact that, on the one hand, the responsibility for the design and monitoring of the processes has now been placed under the autonomy of the universities and, on the other, in the growing emphasis on outcomes assessment. This is consistent with the process of European convergence, in which there has been a shift of emphasis from contents to learning outcomes, as set out in the recent Bucharest Communiqué (2012) of the ministers responsible for higher education in the EHEA, which draws attention to the requirement that institutions further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures. The assessment of learning outcomes is therefore increasingly necessary in accreditation procedures, especially in facilitating the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions (ECA, 2009).

Note

Reference is made more often in this guide to **learning outcomes**, as to competences, given the more frequent use of the term at international level.

Learning assessment is the process whereby it is possible to determine the level of achievement of the learning outcomes, as set out in ESG 1.3 (Assessment of students), which recommends that "students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently" (ENQA, 2005). Both the learning activities as well as the system of assessment need to be relevant, public and adequate to certify the intended learning outcomes set out in the competence profile. The fitness of purpose of the system for assessment infers a judgment regarding its relevance (validity) and an assessment of the level of discrimination of these activities and their assurance of quality (reliability). Furthermore, international good practices, such as those of the Quality Assurance Agency (UK) recommend special emphasis is put on the assessment of the processes used by an HEI to design, approve and monitor its assessment strategies (QAA, 2006).

The labour market outcomes of graduates (graduate destinations) are also assessed in this section, as they are one of the key outcomes of university studies. This section makes use of the wealth of the information system on this aspect of the Catalan university system, which provides for a contextualized analysis of the main indicators.

Note

An analysis of the satisfaction outcomes of the main stakeholders provides an assessment of the degree to which their needs and expectations regarding the programme have been met. These outcomes affect many of the elements in programme accreditation, given that the awareness of stakeholder satisfaction, in particular that of students and graduates, with the programme of study as a whole and the different dimensions of the programme that are assessable, such as teaching staff, the physical resources, the support and guidance services and the public information, amongst others, is very important. At the time of accreditation, the HEI should have in place a system for compiling information on the satisfaction of the different stakeholders, at least the students and graduates, which is formally established and implemented and within the framework of the processes defined in the IQAS. The cross-dimensional nature of these outcomes means that satisfaction outcomes are not dealt with as a whole in this section, but across the entire accreditation process.



At the time of accreditation, HEIs should have instruments that are formally established and implemented for compiling information on stakeholder satisfaction. Considering the cross-dimensional nature of these outcomes, it is recommended these are not just analysed in this section, although this information will be a key element for the focus groups.

At the time of programme accreditation, the HEI is therefore expected to comply with the following standard:

Learning and assessment activities are consistent with the programme's competence profile. The outcomes of these processes are adequate in terms of both academic achievements, corresponding to the programme's level according to the QF-EHEA in Spain, and the academic and employment indicators.

This overall standard is divided into the following specific standards:

- 6.1. The learning activities are consistent with the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to the appropriate level for the programme in the QF-EHEA in Spain.
- 6.2. The assessment system provides for reliable certification of the intended learning outcomes and is public.
- 6.3. The values for the academic indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the programme.
- 6.4. The values for the graduate labour market/destination indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the programme.

Evidence

IQAS documentation on the processes associated with programme delivery to encourage student learning and the compilation and analysis of outcomes for programme enhancement.

Assessment of standards 6.1 and 6.2

The programme coordinators have to select the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree), the work experience/placement (when this is compulsory), four courses in the case of First Cycle programmes and up to two in the case of Second Cycle degrees, according to the following criteria:

- Compulsory subjects.
- For First Cycle programmes: the subjects selected should be representative of the main areas of the curriculum and the different courses in the syllabus and correspond to scientific foundation courses as well as technical/applied subjects and procedures.
- If the curriculum contains work experience placement, and if this work experience placement extends beyond the scope of just one subject (i.e. it is cross-disciplinary in nature), the HEI may select the work experience/placement that it considers to be most significant.



In its preliminary visit to the faculty, the external audit panel may ask for additional subjects to be included if the analysis of the evidence so dictates.

The evidence to be provided for this series is of two types:

a) Information on learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment systems

The evidence on this point may be presented in summarised table form, as proposed below:

Table 1. Relevant learning outcomes of the selected subjects (HEI):

A. List of the programme learning outcomes (competence profile)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning outcome 1 ▪ Learning outcome 2 ▪ ... ▪ Learning outcome <i>n</i> 				
B. Relevance in the assessment of the subject of each learning outcome (L = low, M = moderate, H = high)				
Selected subjects	Learning outcome 1	Learning outcome 2	...	Learning outcome <i>n</i>
Subject 1				
Subject 2				
Subject 3				
Subject 4				
Work experience placement				
Final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree)				

- Table 2. Learning activities in the selected subjects (HEI).
- Table 3. Systems for assessment in the selected subjects: criteria, type, grading system (HEI).
- Table 4. Grades for all of the subjects in the study: student completion rate (percentage sitting finals), failure rate, pass rate, Upper Second class degrees (2:1), First class honours (First) and degrees with distinction (HEI).
- Table 5. List of the First Cycle/Second Cycle degree final-year projects and dissertations for the current academic year, with the type and subject (HEI).
- Table 6. List of work experience/placement centres (work settings), the number of students in the current academic year and, where applicable, the type/scope of work experience/placement (HEI).

b) A sample of student tests and coursework

A selection of evidence will need to be prepared of the student assessment tests within the context of the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree), work

experience/placement and the other selected subjects. The selection of written tests, assignments and/or reports will need to cover the spectrum of grades.

One piece of evidence for each grade awarded for each selected subject will suffice. Steps will be taken to ensure the anonymity of evidence.



The objective of this section is to verify that the learning outcomes have been achieved according to the anticipated level. The criterion therefore is to check that the tests are relevant, i.e. that they serve to show the level of competence achievement. Under no circumstances will there be any review of grades already awarded. The basis of the assessment will be the quality of the student tests and coursework as a whole, and not student tests and coursework that are either specifically excellent or poor.

Assessment of standard 6.3 (AQU Catalunya)

This requires an analysis of the values and trend over time of the following indicators:

- Graduation rate.
- Non-completion (Drop-out) rate.
- Efficiency rate.
- Achievement rate.

In addition, the programme may provide many other different indicators, defined within the context of its IQAS and already used in the monitoring of recognised First Cycle and Second Cycle degrees.

Assessment of standard 6.4 (AQU Catalunya)

The values for the following indicators will be analysed:

- Employment rate.
- Match rate (percentage of people with job duties that call for a university education).
- Mean assessment for the usefulness of theoretical knowledge gained (among those who are employed and with jobs that require a university-level education).
- Mean assessment for the usefulness of practical knowledge gained (among those who are employed and with jobs that require a university-level education).

In order to assess these sections, benchmark values will be needed for other programmes in the same discipline as well as the employment rate for the economically active population in the same period in which the survey is carried out.

Level of compliance with the standards

These standards are assessed according to four levels of achievement:

- **Quality-level compliance.** The standard is fully achieved and in addition there are examples of good practices that exceed the minimum level required.
- **Compliant.** The standard is fully achieved at the HEI.
- **Compliant with conditions.** The minimum level for the standard is achieved and aspects identified that will need to be improved. The nature of these aspects is such that they can be improved within a reasonable period of time.
- **Non-compliant.** The minimum level require for the corresponding standard is not achieved by the programme. Improvements that need to be introduced are such that the standard cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time.

Issues for the focus groups

Management team/Programme coordination

- Measures established to ensure satisfactory learning levels are achieved.

Students and graduates

- Awareness of the assessment system.
- Match between the level of requirement of the learning and assessment activities and the intended learning outcomes.
- Satisfaction with the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree): learning level achieved, the process of supervision and assessment.
- Satisfaction with work experience/placement: learning level achieved, the functioning of supervision and assessment.

Graduates

- Education and job match: the fit between the use of skills acquired during university studies and the workplace.
- Satisfaction with the relationship between the intended and actual learning outcomes.

Teaching staff

- Fitness of purpose of the teaching/class activities.
- Match between the level of requirement of the learning and assessment activities and the intended learning outcomes.
- Satisfaction with the relationship between the intended and actual learning outcomes.
- Final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree): the functioning of supervision and possible connections with specific areas of research and research groups.
- Work experience: the fitness of purpose of the work settings, the functioning of supervision and assessment.

Employers

- Education and job match: the fit between the use of skills acquired during university studies and the workplace.
- Satisfaction with the relationship between the intended and actual learning outcomes.
- Comparison with other graduates.
- Understanding of the assessment system used for work experience/placement and the final-year project and dissertation work (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).

7. Additional dimensions (chosen by the faculty)

Several additional dimensions to be developed are given below, a limited number of which can be chosen by the faculty, once the accreditation process has been set in motion. Compliance or non-compliance with these dimensions shall not condition the outcome of the accreditation of the faculty's programmes.

Learning assessment

1. The HEI's policy on learning assessment.
2. Adequate definition of the learning outcomes and the outcome assessment map: assessment strategies and the type of coursework.
3. Assessment coordination.
4. Assessment of work experience/placement.
5. Assessment of the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).
6. Satisfaction of the teaching staff and students with the system used for assessment.
7. Public information on the system used to assess the learning outcomes.
8. Quality assurance of the system used for assessment.

Internationalisation

1. Policy and strategic plan for internationalisation.
2. Internationalisation of the faculty's programmes.
3. Internationalisation of research.
4. Support systems.
5. Satisfaction with the experience.

Interaction between research and teaching

- a) At either HEI or faculty level:
 1. Planning and organisation.
 2. Fitness for purpose of the strategy that deals with the interaction between teaching and research.
 3. Policies for academic governance and human resources.
 4. Outcomes.
- b) At faculty programme level:
 1. Design and contents.
 2. The teaching and research profile of the teaching staff.

3. Final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) and areas of research.
4. Student involvement.

Sustainability of the faculty's programmes

1. Supply/demand.
2. Persistence.
3. Graduation.
4. Employability.
5. Cost.

Value added of the faculty's programmes

1. Satisfaction of social needs.
2. Social and personal advancement of the graduates.
3. Plan for study grants ("internal" grant and scholarship recipients).
4. Guidance for cooperative learning.
5. Service learning (work experience, social aid and assistance).

IV. RUBRIC REPORT

Standard 2

2.1. The HEI publishes information that is truthful, complete and up to date on the programme's characteristics, its delivery and the outcomes achieved.	
Quality-level compliance	Comprehensive and relevant information on the programme's characteristics, delivery and actual outcomes.
	The HEI regularly updates the information prior to the start of the academic year or corresponding academic period according to the processes set out in the IQAS.
Compliant	Relevant information on the programme's characteristics and delivery. Information albeit incomplete on the actual outcomes.
	The HEI updates the information prior to the start of the academic year or corresponding academic period, although the processes set out in the IQAS are not followed.
Compliant with conditions	Incomplete information on the programme's characteristics, delivery and actual outcomes.
	The public information is not kept up to date and some of the required content considered to be relevant for students on the programme are lacking.
Non-compliant	Inadequate information on the programme's characteristics, delivery and actual outcomes, which prevents stakeholders from having an overall view of the programme.
	The public information is not kept up to date and a large proportion of the required content considered to be highly relevant for students on the programme is lacking.
2.2. Relevant information on the programme is easily accessible to all stakeholders, including the outcomes of monitoring and, where applicable, the programme's accreditation.	
Quality-level compliance	Very clear, legible and aggregated information is posted on the HEI's website that has been designed specifically for each of the different stakeholders. Important programme content is therefore easily accessible to all of the stakeholders. Reports associated with the programme's monitoring and accreditation are publicly available to all stakeholders.
Compliant	Clear, legible and aggregated information is posted on the HEI's website. Important programme content is therefore easily accessible to all of the stakeholders. Reports associated with the programme's monitoring and accreditation are publicly available to all stakeholders.
Compliant with conditions	The information posted on the HEI's website is not very clear, legible or aggregated. Aspects of either restricted or unavailable access to certain groups. Access to certain contents and for certain stakeholders is therefore difficult. Reports associated with the programme's monitoring and accreditation are incompletely

	published, and not for the main stakeholders.
Non-compliant	The information posted on the HEI's website is unclear, illegible and disaggregated. The information is systematically limited to certain groups. Access to certain contents and for certain stakeholders is therefore not guaranteed. Reports associated with the programme's monitoring and accreditation are not made publicly available.
2.3. The HEI publishes the programme's IQAS.	
Quality-level compliance	The HEI publishes and extensively disseminates the quality policy, the IQAS processes and aspects stemming from accountability. The information reaches society in general.
Compliant	The HEI publishes and disseminates the quality policy, the IQAS processes and aspects stemming from accountability. The information reaches the main stakeholders.
Compliant with conditions	The HEI publishes and disseminates the quality policy, the IQAS processes and aspects stemming from accountability. The information reaches the main stakeholders in an incomplete form.
Non-compliant	The HEI neither publishes nor disseminates the quality policy, the IQAS processes and aspects stemming from accountability. The information does not reach the main stakeholders.

Standard 3

3.1. The implemented IQAS facilitates programme design and approval.	
Quality-level compliance	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that facilitates optimum programme design and approval, with the involvement of all the stakeholders.
Compliant	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that facilitates programme design and approval, with the involvement of the most important stakeholders.
Compliant with conditions	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that facilitates incomplete programme design and approval.
Non-compliant	The IQAS does not comprise any process (or it has not been implemented) for programme design and/or approval.
3.2. The implemented IQAS ensures the compilation of relevant information and outcomes for efficient programme management, in particular the learning outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.	
Quality-level compliance	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that manages the optimum compilation of relevant outcomes (in particular, indicators on the learning outcomes), with a table of indicators with complete information on the changes over time in these indicators.
	The IQAS allows for the compilation of information on stakeholder satisfaction (in particular, that of graduates, students, teaching staff and employers) with the programme of studies.
Compliant	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that manages the compilation of indicators on learning outcomes, with a full table of indicators for the last academic year, with incomplete information on the changes over time in these indicators.
	The IQAS provides for the compilation of information on the satisfaction of students and graduates with the programme of studies.
Compliant with conditions	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that manages the compilation of indicators on learning outcomes in an incomplete way, with incomplete information on the indicators for the last academic year and the changes over time in these indicators.
	The IQAS compiles information on student satisfaction only with regard to certain aspects of the programme of study (for example, subject/teacher).
Non-compliant	The IQAS does not comprise any process (or it has not been implemented) to manage the compilation of indicators on learning outcomes. The data that are available are incomplete and do not include any time series.
	The IQAS does not compile any information on stakeholder satisfaction with the programme of study.
3.3. The implemented IQAS facilitates programme monitoring and, where applicable, modification,	

and it ensures continuous quality enhancement through the analysis of objective data.	
Quality-level compliance	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that includes annual programme monitoring activities, in which the relevant stakeholders participate, the main outcome of which is the monitoring report.
	The monitoring reports comprehensively address the required series of dimensions; they make a systematic and objective analysis of each dimension; and they provide relevant and accessible evidence that supports the analysis and confirms a highly successful programme delivery.
	The enhancement measures implemented are consistent with the analysis of the compiled information and outcomes, and they are set out in plans for enhancement, together with the people who are in charge and the corresponding timetable.
	The monitoring of enhancements and the evidence provided confirm that enhancement measures have been effective, as changes in the indicators show that the anticipated objectives of the measures have been achieved.
	The stakeholders are familiar with the process of drawing up, implementing and monitoring enhancement measures, and they have been involved.
Compliant	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that includes annual programme monitoring activities, the main outcome of which is the monitoring report.
	The monitoring reports adequately address the required series of dimensions, their analysis of each dimension is sufficient and they provide evidence that supports the analysis and confirms correct programme delivery.
	The enhancement measures implemented are partially based on the analysis of the compiled information and outcomes. In the absence of a structured quality enhancement plan, enhancements have been prioritised according to objective criteria.
	The monitoring of enhancement measures and the evidence provided confirm that measures have been reasonably effective, as changes in the indicators show that some of the objectives have been achieved.
	Most of the stakeholders have only participated indirectly in the drawing up, implementation and monitoring of the enhancement measures.
Compliant with conditions	The IQAS comprises an implemented process on the annual programme monitoring activities that is incomplete, and the annual monitoring report is not the direct outcome of the process.
	Certain shortcomings exist in the monitoring reports in respect of the analysis of one dimension or another and not all of the required evidence in support of the analysis is provided, which prevents confirmation of adequate programme delivery.
	The enhancement measures implemented are only partially based on compiled information and indicators. The criterion for the prioritisation of the enhancement measures is not clear.
	The monitoring of enhancement measures and the evidence provided demonstrates the limited efficacy of the enhancement measures.

	The participation of the stakeholders in the drawing up, implementation and monitoring of enhancement measures is not clearly evident from the evidence presented.
Non-compliant	The IQAS does not comprise any process (or it has not been implemented) that includes annual programme monitoring activities.
	There are serious shortcomings in the monitoring reports in respect of the analysis of the dimensions, the evidence provided is insufficient and information is lacking on programme delivery.
	The enhancement measures are not based on any evidence or indicators. There is no prioritisation of the enhancement measures.
	There has been no monitoring of enhancements implemented and it is not known whether the anticipated objectives have been achieved or not.
	Many of the stakeholders do not participate in the enhancement measures or there is no evidence of their participation.
3.4. The implemented IQAS facilitates programme accreditation and ensures that it is satisfactorily carried out.	
Quality-level compliance	The IQAS comprises an implemented process for programme accreditation, which includes establishing the composition of the focus groups and producing the documentation required for accreditation. All of the stakeholders take part in this process, the main outcome of which is the preaccreditation self-assessment report.
	The accreditation report comprehensively addresses the series of standards required for accreditation, it gives a systematic and objective analysis of each standard and programme delivery, and it provides relevant and accessible evidence to support the analysis and confirm a highly successful programme delivery.
Compliant	The IQAS comprises an implemented process for programme accreditation, which includes preparation of the documentation required for accreditation. The main outcome of this process is the preaccreditation self-assessment report.
	The accreditation report adequately addresses the series of standards required for accreditation, it gives a sufficient systematic and objective analysis of each standard and programme delivery, and it provides evidence to support the analysis and confirm correct programme delivery.
Compliant with conditions	The IQAS comprises an implemented process for programme accreditation, although the documentation required for accreditation and the preaccreditation self-assessment report are not direct outcomes of the application of the IQAS.
	Shortcomings exist in the accreditation report in respect of the analysis of one standard or another and/or programme delivery, and not all of the necessary evidence to support the analysis is provided, which prevents confirmation of adequate programme delivery.
Non-compliant	The IQAS does not comprise any process (or it has not been implemented) that includes the necessary activities for programme accreditation.

	There are serious shortcomings in the accreditation report in respect of the analysis of the standards, the evidence provided is insufficient and information is lacking on programme delivery.
3.5. The implemented IQAS is regularly reviewed to analyse its fitness for purpose and, where appropriate, a quality enhancement plan is put forward to optimise the system's functioning.	
Quality-level compliance	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that leads the HEI to regularly and thoroughly carry out a review of the fitness for purpose of the IQAS itself. The review, in which all of the stakeholders participate, results in a report that sets out, amongst other things, the more significant modifications made to the IQAS.
	The enhancements to the IQAS are consistent with the review carried out, and they are set out in plans for enhancement with the people who are in charge and the corresponding timetable.
	The monitoring of enhancements to the IQAS confirms their efficacy and that the anticipated objectives in the context of programme delivery have been achieved.
	The stakeholders are knowledgeable about and involved in the process of drawing up, implementing and monitoring enhancement measures.
	The evidence as a whole shows that there is a consolidated quality culture in the faculty, which contributes to continuous improvement, and that the stakeholders in the IQAS attest to the system's potential to assure programme quality.
Compliant	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that leads the HEI to carry out a partial review of the fitness for purpose of the IQAS itself. The review results in a report that sets out, amongst other things, the more significant modifications made to the IQAS.
	The enhancements to the IQAS are consistent with the review carried out. In the absence of a structured quality enhancement plan, enhancements have been prioritised according to objective criteria.
	The monitoring of enhancements to the IQAS confirms that they have been reasonably effective and that some of the anticipated objectives for the enhancement of programme delivery have been achieved.
	Most of the stakeholders have only participated indirectly in the process of drawing up, implementing and monitoring enhancement measures.
	The evidence as a whole shows that there is a quality culture in the process of being consolidated in the HEI, which contributes to continuous improvement.
Compliant with conditions	The IQAS does not have any process in place to review the fitness of purpose of the IQAS itself. Some actions for the partial review and enhancement of some IQAS processes are carried out although not in a systematic way.
	Enhancements to the IQAS are partially based on the review carried out. The criteria for their prioritisation are unclear.
	The monitoring of enhancements to the IQAS is incomplete and there is no evidence to confirm that any of the anticipated objectives have been achieved.

	<p>The evidence presented does not clarify the role of the different stakeholders in the review and enhancement of the IQAS.</p>
	<p>The available information shows that the HEI has not sufficiently developed a quality culture in the institution to effectively contribute to programme enhancement.</p>
<p><i>Non-compliant</i></p>	<p>The HEI does not regularly review the fitness for purpose of the IQAS for the quality assurance of the programmes it delivers.</p>
	<p>The HEI does not promote a quality culture for the continuous improvement of its programmes of study.</p>

Standard 4

4.1. The teaching staff meet the qualifications requirements for the faculty's programmes, and they have sufficient and recognised teaching, research and, where applicable, professional experience.	
Quality-level compliance	<p>The teaching staff have both the set qualifications and external recognition, together with the experience and sufficient dedication, to deliver quality-level teaching.</p> <p>The students are highly satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For Teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees:</p> <p>The teaching staff are actively involved in recognised research projects.</p> <p>The students are highly satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of the Teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees.</p>
	<p>For year-one teaching staff:</p> <p>The faculty has established adequate criteria for the assignment of year-one teaching staff.</p> <p>The students are highly satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of year-one teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of First Cycle final-year projects and work experience/placement:</p> <p>The faculty has established adequate criteria for the assignment of supervision for First Cycle final-year project work and compulsory external work experience/placement.</p> <p>The students are highly satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and research/professional experience of the teaching staff supervising First Cycle final-year project work and compulsory external work experience/placement.</p>
Compliant	<p>The teaching staff has both the set qualifications and external recognition, together with the experience and sufficient dedication, to deliver quality-level teaching.</p> <p>The students are satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees:</p> <p>A majority of the teaching staff is actively involved in recognised research projects.</p> <p>The students are satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of Teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees.</p>
	<p>For year-one teaching staff:</p> <p>Although the faculty has no established criteria for the assignment of year-one teaching staff, the qualifications and volume of assigned teaching staff are adequate.</p> <p>The students are satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the programme's year-one teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of First Cycle final-year projects and work experience/placement:</p>

	<p>Although the faculty has not established any adequate criteria for assigning supervision for First Cycle final-year project work and compulsory external work experience/placement, the teaching staff that is assigned meets the required profile.</p> <p>The students are satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of teaching staff supervising First Cycle final-year project work and work experience/placement.</p>
<p>Compliant with conditions</p>	<p>Part of the teaching staff has both the set qualifications and external recognition, although they do not have (or not all of them have) adequate experience and dedication to deliver quality-level teaching.</p> <p>The students are partially satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees:</p> <p>The involvement of the teaching staff in recognised research projects is limited.</p> <p>The students are partially satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of the Teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees.</p>
	<p>For year-one teaching staff:</p> <p>The faculty has not established any adequate criteria for the assignment of year-one teaching staff for the programme, and there are shortcomings as regards the qualification and volume of assigned teaching staff.</p> <p>The students are partially satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the programme's year-one teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of the First Cycle final-year project and work experience/placement:</p> <p>The faculty has not established any adequate criteria for the supervision of First Cycle final-year project work or compulsory external work experience/placement, and there are shortcomings as regards the assigned teaching staff.</p> <p>The students are partially satisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of the teaching staff supervising First Cycle final-year project work and compulsory external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>Non-compliant</p>	<p>Only a minority of the teaching staff has both the set qualifications and external recognition, together with adequate experience and dedication, to deliver quality-level teaching.</p> <p>The majority of students are dissatisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees:</p> <p>The involvement of teaching staff in recognised research projects is practically non-existent.</p> <p>The majority of students are dissatisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of the teaching staff of Second Cycle degrees.</p>
	<p>For year-one teaching staff:</p> <p>The faculty has no established criteria for the assignment of year-one teaching, and there are serious shortcomings as regards the qualification and volume of assigned</p>

	<p>teaching staff</p> <p>The majority of students are dissatisfied with the teaching skills and abilities of the programme's year-one teaching staff.</p>
	<p>For teaching staff of the First Cycle final-year project and work experience/placement:</p> <p>The faculty has not established any adequate criteria for the supervision of First Cycle final-year project work or compulsory external work experience/placement, and there are serious shortcomings as regards the assigned teaching staff.</p> <p>The majority of students are dissatisfied with the teaching skills and abilities and the research/professional experience of the teaching staff supervising First Cycle final-year project work and compulsory external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>4.2. There are sufficient teaching staff in the faculty, and staff assignment is adequate for them to carry out their duties and attend the students.</p>	
Quality-level compliance	<p>The structure of the body of teaching staff and the number of teachers are ideal for delivery of the programme and attending the students.</p> <p>The students are highly satisfied with the attentiveness of the teaching staff in their learning process.</p>
Compliant	<p>The structure of the body of teaching staff and the number of teachers are sufficient for delivery of the programme and attending the students.</p> <p>The students are satisfied with the attentiveness of the teaching staff in their learning process.</p>
Compliant with conditions	<p>The structure of the body of teaching staff and the number of teachers are insufficient for delivery of the programme and attending the students.</p> <p>The students are partially satisfied with the attentiveness of the teaching staff in their learning process.</p>
Non-compliant	<p>There are serious shortcomings in the structure of the body of teaching staff and the number of teachers as regards delivery of the programme and attending the students.</p> <p>The majority of students are mostly dissatisfied with the attentiveness of the teaching staff in their learning process.</p>
<p>4.3. The HEI offers support and opportunities for enhancing teaching quality in the faculty.</p>	
Quality-level compliance	<p>The teaching staff receives considerable institutional support for carrying out their duties and the quality enhancement of teaching.</p>
Compliant	<p>The teaching staff receives institutional support for carrying out their duties and the quality enhancement of teaching.</p>
Compliant with conditions	<p>The teaching staff receives little institutional support for carrying out their duties and the quality enhancement of teaching.</p>
Non-compliant	<p>The teaching staff receives no institutional support for carrying out their duties or the quality enhancement of teaching.</p>

Standard 5

5.1. The academic guidance service provides adequate support for the learning process, and the careers and professional guidance service facilitates entry into the labour market.	
Quality-level compliance	The level of both student and tutor satisfaction with the academic guidance service is high.
	The efficacy of the tutorial support plan is clearly a fundamental element of support for the students in teaching and learning, as is evident from the changes in the indicators on academic achievement. The tutorial support plan has been progressively adapted to the students' needs.
	The HEI has an action plan to facilitate integration into society and the labour market, and the activities carried out (type, duration, dissemination, support staff, etc.) are very adequate.
Compliant	It is clear from the satisfaction indicators that the academic guidance service cover the needs of both new-entry students and students already enrolled.
	The tutorial support plan is appreciated by both students and teaching staff as a useful element of support in teaching and learning.
	Careers and professional guidance is adequate, considering the available evidence and satisfaction with the fitness of purpose of activities that have been carried out (type, duration, dissemination, support staff, etc.).
Compliant with conditions	It is clear from the assessments of the students and teaching staff that there are certain shortcomings in the way that the academic guidance service responds to the needs of both new-entry students and students already enrolled.
	The tutorial support plan is only partially effective as a fundamental support for student teaching and learning.
	There are shortcomings in careers and professional guidance detected by the indicators for use and/or satisfaction with the activities carried out (type, duration, dissemination, support staff, etc.).
Non-compliant	There is no evidence that the academic guidance service responds to the needs of new-entry students during registration, nor those of students already enrolled.
	There is no evidence that the tutorial support plan is effective as a fundamental support for student teaching and learning.
	The careers and professional guidance is inadequate, according to the indicators for use and/or satisfaction with the activities carried out (type, duration, dissemination, support staff, etc.).

5.2. The available physical resources are adequate for the number of students and the characteristics of the programme.	
Quality-level compliance	The library service facilities are satisfactory and they encourage autonomous learning.
	<p>For non-CBUC faculties:</p> <p>The library's collection satisfactorily fulfils the needs of the programme, there is a high level of use and it is clearly inter-connected with research work going on in the faculty.</p>
	The teaching infrastructure is first-rate for motivating, facilitating and enhancing student learning (according to student number, up-to-dateness and quality of the equipment).
Compliant	The library service facilities are adequate for autonomous learning.
	<p>For non-CBUC faculties:</p> <p>The library's collection is adequate for the needs of the programme, it is accessible and there is a certain connection with research work going on in the faculty.</p>
	The teaching infrastructures deal adequately with the needs of student learning (relevant and sufficient equipment and adequate facilities).
Compliant with conditions	There are shortcomings in the library service facilities.
	<p>For non-CBUC faculties:</p> <p>There are certain documentary shortcomings and/or accessibility problems with the library's collection.</p>
	There are shortcomings in the teaching infrastructures as regards the number of places, security, lack of and/or inadequate equipment.
Non-compliant	The library service facilities are inadequate.
	<p>For non-CBUC faculties:</p> <p>The library service does not provide students with sufficient documentation throughout their studies and/or it is not sufficiently accessible enough.</p>
	The teaching infrastructures do not respond sufficiently to the students' learning needs throughout their studies.

Standard 6

6.1. The learning activities are consistent with the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to the appropriate level for the programme in the QF-EHEA in Spain.	
Quality-level compliance	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The teaching methodology is satisfactorily aligned with the learning outcomes.</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows high levels of student learning and they easily comply with the requirements for the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p>
	<p>For the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) comply satisfactorily with the learning outcomes and the programme's required level in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>The final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) follow a subject planning that is consistent with the groups and lines of research and/or knowledge transfer of the teaching staff.</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is highly appropriate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).</p>
	<p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that the external work experience/placement conforms satisfactorily with the learning outcomes and the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>The entities participating as practical work settings are highly appropriate for external work experience/placement.</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is highly appropriate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with external work experience/placement.</p>
Compliant	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The teaching methodology is designed to offer the students opportunities to integrate the learning outcomes.</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows a high level of student learning and that they sufficiently comply with the requirements for the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p>
	<p>For the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) comply with the requirements for the programme's level as specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain, although there is an uneven match with the learning outcomes.</p> <p>Most final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) correspond to subject planning that is consistent with the groups and lines of</p>

	<p>research and/or knowledge transfer of the teaching staff</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is adequate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degrees).</p> <p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that external work experience/placement conforms with the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain, although there is a mismatch with the programme outcomes.</p> <p>External work experience/placement takes place mostly in adequate work settings (centres).</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is adequate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>Compliant with conditions</p>	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The teaching methodology offers a reasonable number of opportunities to develop the intended learning outcomes</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows an uneven level of student learning and it is doubtful whether the requirements for the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain are complied with.</p>
	<p>For the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) only partially correspond to the learning outcomes and the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>The final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) partially correspond to subject planning that is consistent with the groups and lines of research and/or knowledge transfer of the teaching staff.</p> <p>There are inadequacies in the system of supervision and assessment and/or it only allows for the certification of certain learning outcomes connected with the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degrees).</p>
	<p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that the external work experience/placement only partially conforms with the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>There are certain inadequacies in the entities that participate as work settings for external work experience/placement.</p> <p>There are certain inadequacies in the system of supervision and assessment and/or it only allows for the certification of certain learning outcomes connected with external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>Non-compliant</p>	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>There is no clear relationship between the learning outcomes and the programme specification.</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows an inadequate level of student learning and non-compliance with the requirements for the</p>

	<p>programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>For the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) correspond with neither the programme learning outcomes nor the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>The final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) seldom correspond to subject planning that is consistent with the groups and lines of research and/or knowledge transfer of the teaching staff</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is inadequate to certify the learning outcomes connected with the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).</p> <p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>The documentary evidence of the students' achievements shows that external work experience/placement corresponds with neither the programme learning outcomes nor with the programme's level specified in the QF-EHEA in Spain.</p> <p>There are considerable inadequacies in the entities that participate as work settings for external work experience/placement.</p> <p>The system of supervision and assessment is inadequate to certify the learning outcomes connected with external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>6.2. The assessment system provides for reliable certification of the intended learning outcomes and is public.</p>	
<p>Quality-level compliance</p>	<p>The criteria for assessing student tests and coursework are explicit, varied and fit for purpose, and they allow for the quality of learning to be distinguished.</p> <p>There is documentary evidence that provides access to comprehensive information on the requirements for student assessment (number of exams to be taken, tests, etc.) and also the assessment criteria, weighting in the final grade, etc.</p> <p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The assessment system is varied, innovative and highly appropriate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with the subjects.</p> <p>For final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) are assessed using relevant criteria and with the guarantee of reliability of the grades awarded.</p> <p>Integrated public information is available on the entire system for assessing final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).</p> <p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>External work experience/placement is assessed using relevant criteria and with the guarantee of reliability of the grades awarded.</p> <p>Integrated public information is available on the entire system for assessing external work experience/placement.</p>

Compliant	<p>The criteria for assessing student tests and coursework are adequate and they allow for the quality of the different aspects of student learning to be distinguished to a certain level.</p> <p>There is documentary evidence that shows access to sufficient information on the requirements for student assessment (number of exams to be taken, tests, etc.) and also the assessment criteria, weighting of final grades, etc</p>
	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The assessment system is adequate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with the subjects.</p>
	<p>For final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>The final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) are assessed using relevant criteria, although the grades awarded are not reliable.</p> <p>The public information available on the entire system for the assessment of final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) is adequate, although it is disintegrated.</p>
	<p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>External work experience/placement is assessed using relevant criteria, although the grades awarded are not reliable.</p> <p>The public information available on the entire system for the assessment for external work experience/placement is adequate, although it is disintegrated.</p>
Compliant with conditions	<p>The criteria for assessing student tests and coursework are to a certain degree inadequate and they make it difficult to establish differences in the quality of the different aspects of student learning.</p> <p>There is documentary evidence that shows incomplete access to comprehensive information on the requirements for student assessment (number of exams to be taken, tests, etc.) and also the assessment criteria, weighting in the final grade, etc.</p>
	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>There are certain inadequacies in the assessment system and/or it only allows for the certification of certain learning outcomes connected with the subjects.</p>
	<p>For final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>There are inadequacies in the assessment criteria for final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree) and they do not guarantee the reliability of the grades awarded.</p> <p>There are gaps in the public information on the entire system for the assessment of final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).</p>
	<p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>There are inadequacies in the assessment criteria for external work experience/placement and the reliability of the grades awarded is not reliable.</p> <p>There are gaps in the public information on the system for the assessment of external work experience/placement.</p>
Non-compliant	<p>The criteria for assessing student tests and coursework are neither adequate nor</p>

	<p>relevant for assessment purposes. Their capacity to establish differences in the quality of the different aspects of student learning is either inexistent or arbitrary.</p> <p>There are shortcomings as regards the information on the requirements for student assessment (number of exams to be taken, tests, etc.) and also their assessment criteria, weighting in the final grade, etc.</p>
	<p>For year-one courses:</p> <p>The assessment system is inadequate for certifying the learning outcomes connected with the subjects.</p>
	<p>For final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree):</p> <p>There are significant inadequacies as regards the assessment criteria for final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree), and the grades awarded are not reliable.</p> <p>There are significant gaps in the public information on the system for the assessment of the final-year projects and dissertations (First Cycle/Second Cycle degree).</p>
	<p>For external work experience/placement:</p> <p>There are significant inadequacies as regards the assessment criteria for external work experience/placement and the reliability of the grades awarded is not assured.</p> <p>There are significant gaps in the public information on the system for the assessment of external work experience/placement.</p>
<p>6.3. The values for the academic indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the programme.</p>	
<p>Quality-level compliance</p>	<p>The documentary evidence shows that the time series for the academic indicators is consistent with the type of students and equivalent programmes, and it clearly shows continuous enhancement of the programme.</p>
<p>Compliant</p>	<p>The documentary evidence shows that the time series for the academic indicators is consistent with the type of students and equivalent programmes, although it is not clear if there has been continuous enhancement of the programme.</p>
<p>Compliant with conditions</p>	<p>The documentary evidence shows that there is a certain mismatch in the time series for the academic indicators in relation to the type of students and equivalent programmes, and it does not show continuous improvement of the programme.</p>
<p>Non-compliant</p>	<p>The documentary evidence shows that there is a significant and serious mismatch in the time series for the academic indicators in relation to the type of students and equivalent programmes, and there is no sign of continuous enhancement of the programme.</p>

6.4. The values for the graduate labour market/destination indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the programme.	
Quality-level compliance	The employment rate is higher than that of the working population for the same baseline period and age bracket, and it is higher than that of similar programmes.
	The match rate is higher than that of other programmes in the same discipline.
	The mean assessment for the usefulness of theoretical and practical knowledge acquired is higher than that of other programmes in the same discipline.
Compliant	The employment rate is above that of the working population for the same baseline period and age bracket, and it is adequate compared to that of similar programmes.
	The match rate is adequate compared to that of other programmes in the same discipline.
	The mean assessment for the usefulness of theoretical and practical knowledge acquired is adequate compared to that of other programmes in the same discipline.
Compliant with conditions	The employment rate is close to that of the working population for the same baseline period and age bracket, although it is low compared to that of similar programmes.
	The match rate is slightly low compared to that of other programmes in the same discipline.
	The mean assessment for the usefulness of theoretical and practical knowledge acquired is slightly low compared to that of other programmes in the same discipline.
Non-compliant	The employment rate is low compared to that of the working population for the same baseline period and age bracket.
	The match rate is lower than that of other programmes.
	The mean assessment for the usefulness of theoretical and practical knowledge acquired is clearly low.