



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

Final report assessing the design of the internal quality assurance system

School of Architecture of the Vallès
Technical University of Catalonia

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

University	Technical University of Catalonia
Centre	School of Architecture of the Vallès
IQAS scope	Degrees taught at the School of Architecture of the Vallès
Call	2007 – 2nd stage

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE DESIGN OF THE IQAS

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

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

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

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

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

The IQAS design of the School of Architecture of the Vallès (ETSAV) forms part of an overall approach for all UPC centres and is also backed by the individual development given by the centre itself. The overall approach of the UPC with respect to the working methodology, the structure and the common design of the IQAS (or SAIQ: the abbreviation according to UPC's nomenclature) is valued in a positive light. In addition, it also enables each centre to develop its particular characteristics, except in the case of cross-disciplinary processes put forward by the UPC affecting guidelines 1.3 and 1.4b. In relation to these processes, the general handling of aspects relating to academic and to services and administration staff – which in the case of the latter group includes more information than requested in the AUDIT programme – is considered a positive aspect of the IQAS. The IQAS is implemented in 16 processes developed according to the same structure and nomenclature, allowing for ease of understanding and facilitating a comparison between centres. The following suggested sections are also a positive contribution: assignment of responsibilities, associated evidence and a summary file in each process. A traditional documentation system is used making the system compatible with other quality assurance systems such as ISO 9001.

Cross-disciplinary aspects lending strength to the IQAS design include the compilation of references applied for each AUDIT guideline and the process structure. The use of flowcharts, along with information set out in the summary file, makes it possible to gain a suitable picture of the processes in most cases, and this is viewed in a positive light.

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

As far as the **quality assurance of training programmes** is concerned (guideline 1.1), a positive note is made of the fact that there are two periods for the monitoring of indicators: one on a yearly basis and one every four months.

Various positive aspects have been observed in relation to the extent to which **teaching is student-oriented** (guideline 1.2). Specifically, these include the varied handling of processes included within the guideline, each of which is clearly and fully developed, as well as the approach to the system for statements and claims.

In the case of the **quality improvement and assurance of academic and teaching support staff** (guideline 1.3.), particularly prominent are mechanisms regulating and ensuring decision-making on the admission of academic and teaching support staff. Furthermore, the process for assuring the quality of the training of teaching and research staff bears the hallmark of being successful, since actions are carried out on a regular basis; the three spheres set out in the training plan - integration, initial and ongoing training; the mechanisms for reviewing, monitoring and assessing the plan; the involvement of teaching and research staff in analysis by means of satisfaction surveys, as well as the definition of indicators, are some of the remaining aspects worth highlighting. Lastly, staff information systems and the existence of channels for staff participation are also positive elements.

In relation to the **management and improvement of services and material resources** (guideline 1.4a), a satisfactory assessment is made of the analysis of the suitability of resources

to reaching goals and the proposals for improvement, as well as the submission of service briefs and reports assessing the services.

As regards the **management and improvement of the quality of services and administration staff** (guideline 1.4b), although not called for in the AUDIT programme guidelines, aspects relating to the admission, training, assessment, promotion and acknowledgment of services and administration staff have been defined in tandem with those relating to teaching and research staff, and they are effectively compiled and developed.

With regard to the **analysis and use of results** (guideline 1.5), the attitude of the Quality Assurance Committee is especially prominent since the committee considers the needs of stakeholders.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE DESIGN OF THE IQAS PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION

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

The **scope for improvement** identified in the **UPC overall approach** focuses on the following aspects of the AUDIT programme guidelines:

- Monitoring, review and improvement mechanisms
- Rendering of accounts

The monitoring, review and improvement mechanisms are vital to the smooth management of quality; hence, they must be explained in greater detail. Reference is frequently made to point 8, “Responsibilities”, which fails to set out mechanisms and does not state how often actions will be carried out nor which monitoring methodology will be applied. In addition, indicators which are vital for gauging results are oftentimes not given.

As far as the rendering of accounts is concerned, it is advisable to describe the mechanisms according to the information and the addressees – especially with regard to the quality of teaching – as well as the management of material resources and services. Rendering of accounts is not to be confused with merely informing the interested parties and it must include a valuation of the suitability of the content in terms of volume and appropriateness, as well as considering the effectiveness of the channels for informing stakeholders. In the case of the ETSAV the rendering of accounts must be further developed in the case of guidelines referring to the quality goals and policy, the quality assurance of training programmes, and the management and improvement of services and material resources, and it should likewise describe the mechanisms according to the information to be given and the addressees.

Lastly, it is advisable to establish ties between the quality systems put forward by the centres along with the mechanisms and routes associated with the strategic lines of basic units defined for the UPC as a whole.

As far as the **design of the IQAS submitted by the ETSAV** is concerned, various **cross-disciplinary aspects** have been identified as having scope for improvement. Firstly, it is suggested that an overall reading be conducted on the quality system looking into ties between the guidelines and bringing into line the level of development if needed to make the IQAS implementation easier. Secondly, it is advisable to specify how stakeholders take part in each guideline since the IQAS manual sets out a somewhat generalised description of the involvement of stakeholders and their participation mechanisms. Furthermore, some flowcharts are long and could be summarised if sub-processes are created.

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

With respect to the **quality goals and policy** (guideline 1.0), it is suggested that a more in-depth development be conducted on the procedure making it possible to define and approve the quality goals and policy in order to ensure its dissemination.

The **quality assurance of training programmes** (guideline 1.1) should strengthen mechanisms for introducing improvements to degree review processes.

With respect to the guideline on the extent to which **teaching is student-oriented** (guideline 1.2), although a description is given of the extent to which students are given guidance on academic matters, it is advisable to specify with greater clarity how the information compiled affects changes to teaching methods, content or assessment systems for the various subjects.

In the case of the **quality improvement and assurance of academic and teaching support staff** (guideline 1.3.), it is recommended that the IQAS include specific aspects favouring the satisfaction of staff and the quality of teaching activities, although the teaching support and academic staff policy is regulated for the university as a whole. Moreover, there is a need to develop the mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and improving the models for assessment, promotion and acknowledgment (who and how), since responsibilities have been mixed with the mechanisms for improvement and monitoring. Lastly, it would be pertinent to define the responsibilities and the methods of action of the Teaching Staff Development Service which, according to the flowchart, monitors and assesses work positions.

As far as the **management and improvement of services and material resources** is concerned (guideline 1.4a), it is advisable to link the indicators used for monitoring and managing resources.

As regards the **management and improvement of the quality of services and administration staff** (guideline 1.4b), it is necessary to incorporate specific aspects encouraging satisfaction of services and administration staff, although the policy for this group is regulated for the university as a whole. Furthermore, it is suggested that details be given regarding participation of departments and their directors (service and unit directors, or the management) when it comes to defining, reviewing and improving the services and administration staff policy (for instance, when specifying how contract renewal is conducted).

With regard to the **analysis and use of results** (guideline 1.5), it is necessary to specify the mechanism for monitoring, reviewing and continually improving the results of learning, including strategies designed to ensure improvement and ensure the reliability of the data used to provide said results.

With respect to the **publication of information on degrees** (guideline 1.6), it is recommended to consider the effectiveness of the channels for informing stakeholders.

IV. ANNEX: MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Chair	Mr Ángel Ríos Castro Vice-dean of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences at the University of Castile-La Mancha
Academic member	Mr José Joaquín Mira Solves Rector's representative for Cross-disciplinary Quality Actions of Miguel Hernández University
Academic member	Ms Maria Jesús Mairata Creus Director of the University Quality and Statistics Service of the University of the Balearic Islands
Professional member	Ms Concepción Curet Santisteban Director of Globalmed SLL
Clerk	Ms Núria Comet Señal AQU Catalunya internal quality and project coordinator