



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

# EXPERIENCE FROM AQU CATALUNYA EXTERNAL REVIEW

**Javier Bará Temes, Director**

The Holy See, 14 November 2007

## Summary

1. Preliminary information: overview of the Spanish and Catalan university system, the context of the review, AQU's history
2. AQU's self evaluation process:
3. Development of the visit
4. The report of the panel; structure and main conclusions
5. AQU comments on the review process
6. Conclusions

## Preliminary information

- The Spanish university system
  - 17 Autonomous regions, all with authority on their universities.
  - Regulated by a complex framework of national and autonomic laws
- The university system in Catalonia
  - 7 public universities, 4 private universities plus an Open University (UOC). Total student enrolment is 238,000
- The reference frame for quality assurance
  - One national agency (ANECA), 11 regional agencies.
  - Coordination regulated by recent law, development pending
  - A specific mission: **teaching staff evaluation**. External evaluations required for contracts, promotion and salary

## The context of the external review

- The decision to request an ENQA coordinated review:  
Absence of national requirement and regulations of external reviews.
- The terms of reference for the review:  
Compliance of S&G, ENQA membership reconfirmation  
Effectiveness of teaching staff evaluation
- The European references for an emergent process:  
Theoretical model in S&G (2005)  
'Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies',  
approved 21 Sept. 2006 (GNR)  
ENQA policy on "ENQA organized external review of member  
agencies", internal document, unpublished.

## AQU history and activities

- 1996: Consortium formed by the public universities and the Autonomous Government
- 2000: Member ENQA
- 2000: Certified by norm ISO 9000:1994
- 2003: Spanish Universities Act / Catalanian ensuing Law. It gives AQU official status and a legal basis for external quality assurance
- 2005: The Board approves external evaluation by ENQA

## Evaluation process key dates

### 2006

26 Jan.: AQU sends letter to ENQA

24 Feb. : Request accepted by ENQA board

(this, together with ANECA and AQA, will be the **first ENQA coordinated external reviews** of member agencies)

10 June : AQU starts self-evaluation process through a self evaluation committee

### 2007

**22 Jan.: Self-evaluation report approved by AQU Board**  
(English version: 6 March)

29 Jan.: ENQA proposes review team

## Evaluation process key dates

2007 (cont.)

8 March: ENQA-AQU contract signature

21 May: Draft visit schedule and time-table sent to AQU

28 May: ENQA organized telephone conference with AQU,  
ANECA and AQA review boards chairs and secretaries

17-18 June: Review Board visit

20 July: Draft review report

30 July: AQU comments to draft report

August: Final report ready

## AQU's self evaluation process

### The self-evaluation report (56 pp. plus annexes)

1. Introduction
2. Terms of reference
3. Background and current state of evaluation and higher education in Catalonia
  - The Catalan university system: structure and figures
  - The Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System (AQU Catalunya)
4. Internal evaluation
  - Standard 3.2. Official status
- ...



## AQU's self evaluation process

...

Standard 3.7. External quality assurance criteria and processes used by agencies

A. Institutional assessment

B. Teaching staff assessment

...

5. Final self-evaluation assessment

6. Make-up of the internal and external committees and procedure for the appointment of committee members

7. Summary of enclosed documentation

**The SER identifies strong and weak points in the compliance of all standards (§5) and proposes 15 actions for improvement.**

## Preparation of the committee visit

### The committee composition

*(“Members of the panel should be totally independent of the agency under review and have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience and expertise to conduct the review to a high standard”, GNR)*

- **Thierry Malan** (Chair), Quality Assurance Expert, Honorary Inspecteur Général de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche IGAENR, France;
- **Michael G. Kraft** (Secretary), Academic Staff Member, FH-Council, Austria;
- **Maria José Lemaitre**, Quality Assurance Expert, CNAP (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación), Chile;
- **Jean-Marc Rapp**, Representative of HEIs, European University Association (EUA), Switzerland;
- **Maher Tekaya**, Student Member, European Students' Union (ESU), France.

Panel with recognized international experts, but lacks a member with a good knowledge of the complex regulations of the Spanish/Catalan universities

## Preparation of the committee visit

### The communication ENQA-AQU-Committee

28 May: ENQA organized telephone conference with chairs and secretaries of the three review committees (AQU, ANECA, AQA)

### The visit:

17 June, 20:30, working dinner

18 June, 9:00-13:15, 14:30-18:40

19 June, 9:00-12:45, 14:15-19:00

### The audiences (%time):

AQU (staff, Board, Commissions): 80%

HEI's representatives: 13%

Students: 7%

### June 17, 2007

19:00 Venue: hotel reception, Hotel Montcada, Via Llaetana, 24	Pre-meeting	Chair and Secretary
20:30 Venue: restaurant Senyor Parellada, Argenteria 37; Meet at 20:15 at the hotel reception	Working dinner at a restaurant	Review-Panel Review Panel orientation meeting

### June 18, 2007

09:00 – 09:30 Venue: AQU Meet at 8:50 at the hotel reception	Convening of Review-Panel	
09:30 – 10:00 Venue: AQU	President AQU and Director AQU	Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda, Dr. Javier Bará Temes
10:00 – 11:00 Venue: AQU Via Llaetana, 28, 5a planta	Board of Directors / Standing Committee (4 – 5 members)	Sr. Antoni Giró (rector UPC), Sr. Lluís Ferrer (rector UAB)
11:15-12:00 Venue: AQU	President AQU and Director AQU	Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda, Dr. Javier Bará Temes
12:15 – 13:15 Venue: AQU	Heads and representatives of Services: (Planning and communication / Administration / Quality assessment / Teaching and research)	Maria Giné Soca, Josep Grifoll Saurí, Josep Manel Torres Solà, Carme Perez
13:15 – 14:15 Venue: AQU	Lunch catering	Review-Panel
14:30 – 15:10 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Assessment of Degree Standards (ATP)	Eva Jansson, Business Economics (UAB), Joseba-Jokin Quevedo Casin, Automatic Control (UPC)

## Development of the visit

15:20 – 15:55 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Quality Assessment of University Centres and Activities (ACAU)	Josep Carreras, Physiological Sciences (UB) <sup>6</sup>
15:20 – 15:55 Venue: AQU	Tour through AQU offices and premises	AQU staff
16:00 – 16:15 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
16:15 – 16:50 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Assessment of Individual Merits and Activities (CEMAI)	Carmen Ansotegui, Sebastián Rodríguez
17:00 – 17:30 Venue: AQU	Heads of the Specific CAQ Committees (Assessment of Degree Standards and Programmes / Quality Assessment of University Centres and Activities / Assessment of Individual Merits and Activities)	Dr. Javier Bará Temes, Dr. Pere Botella (also in his function as methodology co-ordinator with ANECA), Ignasi Romagosa
17:40 – 18:40 Venue: AQU	Internal discussion Review-Panel	Review-Panel
21:00 - Venue: Restaurant 7 portes, Pg Isabel II, 14, Barcelona; Meet at 20:40 at the hotel reception	Dinner Review-Panel	Review-Panel

June 19, 2007		
09:00 – 09:30 Venue: AQU	Convening of Review-Panel	Review-Panel
9:30 – 11:00 Venue: AQU	Representatives of HEIs (Teaching staff and QM at the HEIs)	Jordi Riera (Vr URL) Miquel Salgot (UB) Silvia Ruiz (UPC) Jordi Casanova (UB) Maria Taulats (UOC)
11:00 – 11:15 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
11:15 – 12:00 Venue: AQU	Student representatives from HEIs	Magdalena Rovira (UAB) Esperanza Ramírez (UAB) Olatz López Aleix Barrera
12:00 – 12:45 Venue: AQU	Representatives of the Tenure-track Lecturers and Collaborating Lecturers Committee (CLiC) and Research Assessment Committee (CAR)	M Lluïsa Hernanz Juan F Piniella Montserrat Ponsà Ángel Cardama
13:00 – 14:00 Venue: AQU	<i>Lunch catering</i>	Review-Panel
14:15 – 15:00 Venue: AQU	2-3 members of AQU co-ordinated review-panels	Claudi Mans (UB) Juan José Perona (UAB) Claudi Alsina (UPC)
15:15 – 15:30 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
15:30 – 16:00 Venue: AQU	Staff of the internal QA department <sup>7</sup>	Monica Curieses, Josep Grifoll, Albert Basart
15:45 – Venue: AQU	Review Panel meeting	Review-Panel
18:00 Venue: AQU	Feedback session	Review-Panel and AQU representatives
19:00	End of site-visit	
21:00 Venue: restaurant tba	Dinner at restaurant	<i>Facultative; invitation of AQU's Director</i>

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15:45 - Venue: AQU	Review Panel meeting	Review-Panel

## The report of the panel; structure

(Available at: <http://www.enqa.eu/pubitem.lasso?id=151> )

### Executive summary

#### 1 Introduction

#### 2 Background to Agency under review

#### 3 Findings

3.1 ESG 3.1/ENQA criterion 1, 3.2 ESG 3.2/ENQA criterion 2, ...3.8  
ESG 3.8/ENQA Criterion 7

#### 4 Any sections relating to additional Terms of Reference of the review

4.1 AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme

#### 5 Conclusion

#### 6 Annexes



## The report of the panel; main conclusions

- ESG 3.1 : Use of external QA procedures (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.2: Official status (fully compliant)
- ESG 3.3: Activities (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.4: Resources (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.5: Mission statement (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.6: Independence (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures (fully compliant)

4.1 AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme: the review panel concludes that given the current legal situation, AQU fulfils these tasks in a good and efficient manner.

## The report of the panel; main conclusions

### 5.1 Overall findings

“In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is of the opinion that, although in the performance of its functions, AQU Catalunya is not yet fully compliant with all ENQA Membership Regulations and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the Agency is, nonetheless, **sufficiently compliant** to justify full membership of ENQA.”

## AQU comments on the...

### ...internal assessment process

It was a long, intense and fruitful analysis. Recommended to all agencies even if they are not undergoing an external review

Actions to develop some of these proposals were started immediately after SER completion

Given the evaluation calendar, there was no opportunity to negotiate the SER with the panel

*“The exact form and content of the self-evaluation report is something which will need to be negotiated between the panel and the agency under review” (GNR)*

## AQU comments on the...

### ...external assessment process

**External panel:** lacked a member with an in-depth knowledge of the complex regulations of the Catalan/ Spanish university system

**Visit:** 2 days probably a short period, especially given the complex legal framework

**Audiences:** difficult to arrange and to maintain (last minute cancellations)

Composition somewhat unbalanced (80% AQU members)

## AQU comments on the...

...the findings of the panel's report

AQU comments (some critic): meant as a contribution to a necessary meta-evaluation process

External assessment processes based on S&G are in an emergent stage of construction within the European framework.

Comments from evaluated agencies can certainly contribute to the improvement of these processes

Given the impact of an external review on an agency status, the development by ENQA of an Appeals and Complaints Committee is welcome

## AQU comments on the...

### ...the findings of the panel's report

The report structure (each criterion is evaluated) makes the findings clear

The report is a complete and acute diagnosis of the AQU's activity in the light of the S&G

It complements and expands on the self-evaluation report

IT gives AQU a good repertoire of actions for improvement

AQU especially acknowledges the recommendations concerning the design of a strategic plan, the need of a more systematic approach to external evaluation procedures and a better integration of all of the agency's activities

**However...**

## AQU comments on the...

It probably overemphasizes weak over strong points

There is no discussion of the meaning assigned to “substantial compliance”

Recommendations; it is not stated which are addressed to achieving full compliance and which to excellence beyond this point.

It doesn't evaluate the contents and structure of the self-evaluation report, which is the key piece to the entire evaluation process and itself a valuable indicator

There is an excess of cross-over and overlapping between arguments and recommendations that appear repeated in several criteria

The short paragraphs dedicated in the report to teaching staff assessment do not concur with its importance within AQU's activities and the SER

## Conclusions

### What we have learned:

The self evaluation report was a very useful exercise

The external panel provided a different view of the relative importance of the SER findings

The external view provided fundamental information the SER had not found

A strong focus on weaknesses was a bitter medicine to take but very useful once swallowed...

...especially in what concerns actions involving HEIs and the Government



## Conclusions

What are we going to do:

AQU is already working in the proposal for improvement and the recommendations arising both from the SER and from the panel report

We expect most actions to be completed or advanced by mid 2009

A key improvement is that concerning ESG 3.6, independence, which requires a change in the actual Catalanian Universities Act

## Thanks

**Thanks to ENQA for its coordination, to the panel members for their effort, interest and exhaustive work, and to you all for your attention**