

Minimum criteria for the approval of teaching manuals

Background:

Article 19 of the Catalan Universities Act stipulates that university teaching must be subject to assessment and that the universities, in conjunction with AQU Catalunya (Agency for the Quality of the University System in Catalonia) must develop methodologies and programmes for assessing teaching in its different modalities.

On the other hand, in December 2002, the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia passed the document *CRITERIS GENERALS PER A L'AVALUACIÓ DOCENT DEL PROFESSORAT DE LES UNIVERSITATS PÚBLIQUES CATALANES* (GENERAL CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING COMPETENCE IN THE CATALAN STATE-RUN UNIVERSITIES) laying down the organisation and procedure for assessing the teaching competence of university teaching staff. According to this document, AQU Catalunya certifies whether each university's assessment system complies with the general criteria, carries out a comparative study of the different systems and proposes minimum criteria for passing the assessment. In response to this need, AQU Catalunya set up a committee of experts from the state-run Catalan universities which drew up the *HANDBOOK FOR DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INSTITUTIONAL MODEL FOR ASSESSING THE TEACHING COMPETENCE OF TEACHING STAFF AT THE CATALAN STATE-RUN UNIVERSITIES* enabling the universities to produce their own assessment manuals. The criteria laid down in this document refer to this.

In addition, the AQU Catalunya Management Council, comprising the vice-chancellors and chairpersons of the Social Councils of the state-run Catalan universities, passed the following General Frameworks:

- (General Framework for Teacher Assessment (May 2001))
- General Framework for the Design, Monitoring and Review of Curriculums and
- Syllabuses (September 2002)
- General Framework for the Assessment of Student Learning (February 2003)

Aim:

The aim of this document is, on the one hand, to lay down the minimum criteria necessary for universities to obtain the certification of their teacher assessment systems and, on the other, to lay down the minimum criteria for teachers to be able to obtain a positive assessment of their teaching.

Requirements:

In the opinion of AQU Catalunya, the manual for assessing the teaching competence of the university's teaching staff, which concretises the assessment system adopted, must contain the following sections:

- a) The university's institutional policy on teacher assessment;
- b) A specific assessment reference framework for providing incentives to teachers;
- c) The general process and its agents;
- d) Assessment dimensions, indicators and criteria.

The minimum requirements for the dimensions, indicators and criteria are listed here below:

1. Assessment of self-evaluation report

- The self-evaluation report is a document including the teacher's own analysis and evaluation of a series of aspects of his or her teaching activity and contains the duly documented evidence in support of and serving as the basis of the assessment.
- The university shall produce its own self-evaluation report model.
- Positive assessment of the self-evaluation report is a minimum requirement for being considered for the teaching increment awarded by the Catalan autonomous government.

2. Assessment of the teaching assignment of the five-year period

- Members of the university's teaching staff have a recognised particular teaching commitment (teaching assignment) depending on their type of contract, teaching duties and academic assignment. Thus, in accordance with the General Framework for

Teacher Assessment: the university must convey to its teachers a teaching assignment for a (five-year) period containing a number of tasks, such as: planning teaching, preparing teaching materials, co-ordinating groups, etc. Each university must therefore include this dimension in its Manual.

- The university shall at least establish the requirements of the indicators concerning Assessment of Teaching and Assessment of the Teaching Assignment Increment.
- A non-negative assessment on this dimension is considered a minimum requirement for receiving the increment awarded by the Catalan autonomous government.

3. Assessment of planning

- Assessment of teaching planning entails assessing the design of the teaching plan, its suitability, the resources and the teaching materials used. It is important to bear in mind that although the syllabus, as an official document, may be the result of agreements and/or decisions made higher up in the department, the teaching plan represents the teacher's personal concretisation of this. As provided for in the General Framework for Teacher Assessment, and with a view to modernising the syllabuses, the Assessment Manual must include aspects related to the planning of teaching.
- In spite of the fact that the planning of teaching is a complex dimension, the university must produce a protocol allowing it to assess teachers' planning of their teaching and the degree to which they comply with it. Thus, at the very least, the criteria for assessing the curriculum design must be determined.
- As far as the increment awarded by the autonomous government is concerned, assessment of this dimension in 2003 is left up to each university to decide.

4. Assessment of professional development and activity

- Assessment of professional development and performance may comprise the following aspects:
 - 4.1. Assessment of professional training and development;
 - 4.2. Assessment of the direct observation of teaching activity;
 - 4.3. Assessment of specific innovation projects;
 - 4.4. Assessment of participation in teaching improvement tasks;
 - 4.5. Assessment of tasks related to the transition to the European Space;

- During the experimental phase, the university shall decide which of these aspects it implements. However, it is considered necessary to implement at least one of the five, either for all teaching staff or a particular area, category, etc.
- A positive assessment on at least one of the five aspects is considered a minimum requirement in regard to the increment awarded by the autonomous government.

5. Assessment of teaching results

- Assessment of students' academic results is a dimension that is sensitive to inappropriate approaches and a assessment referents taken out of context. Never the less, as stipulated in the General Framework for the Assessment of Student Learning, one of the aims of assessment is to optimise teaching through detailed continuous knowledge of the degree of achievement of student learning allowing decisions to be taken for improving and optimising teaching. That is why the inclusion of this dimension is considered a requirement for approval of the Manual.
- The university shall determine the procedure for assessing this dimension.
- As far as the increment awarded by the autonomous government is concerned, assessment of this dimension in 2003 is left up to each university to decide.

6. Assessment of undergraduate and graduate satisfaction

- Student assessment of teaching activity increasingly requires a variety of different strategies such as:
 - 6.1. Institutional surveys of students' evaluation of the teaching they receive;
 - 6.2. Ad hoc reports;
 - 6.3. Deferred assessments by undergraduates and graduates;
- The university shall decide which of the three indicators proposed it implements and takes into consideration during the experimental phase.
- A non-negative assessment on this dimension is considered a minimum requirement for receiving the increment awarded by the autonomous government.

7. Assessment of involvement in promoting, assessing and disseminating good teaching practice

- The widespread implementation of institutional assessment processes at the state-run universities in Catalonia and the rest of Spain has meant that a large part of the teaching staff has participated in assessment committees and improvement projects. Consequently, the universities' assessment manuals should include this dimension. Universities must therefore draw up a catalogue including the tasks it considers most important in this regard.
- During the experimental phase, inclusion of this dimension in the university's manual shall not be regarded as a minimum requirement.
- A positive assessment on this dimension shall not be considered a requirement for obtaining a final positive assessment in regard to the increment awarded by the autonomous government.

8. Assessment of external recognition of teaching quality

- External recognition of teaching quality is considered evidence of excellence.
- During the experimental phase, inclusion of this dimension in the university's manual shall not be regarded as a minimum requirement.
- A positive assessment on this dimension shall not be considered a requirement for obtaining a final positive assessment in regard to the increment awarded by the autonomous government.