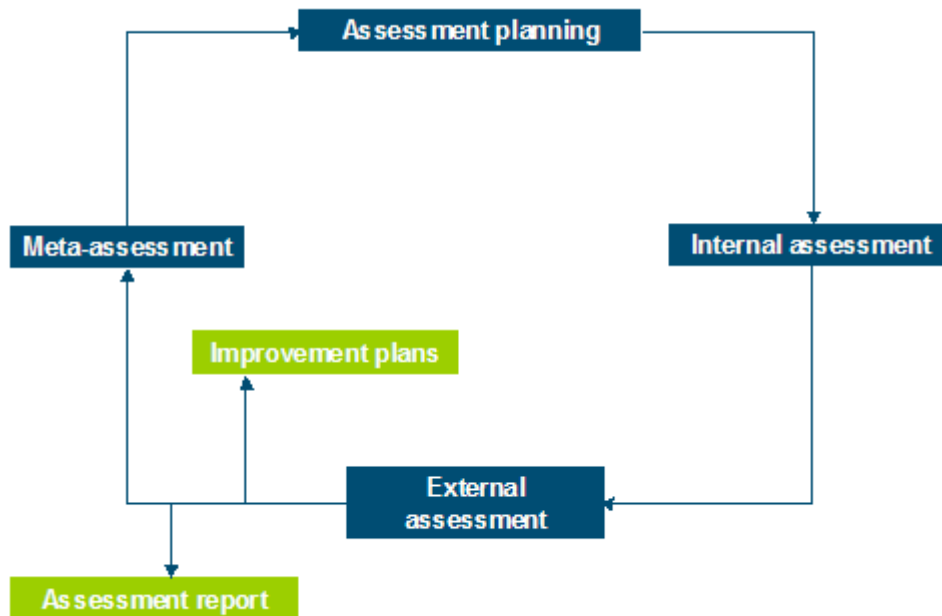


PRO-QU PROGRAMME (1997-2007). ASSESSMENT PROCESS

AQU enters into agreements with universities wishing to participate in the Pro-QU programme, which specify the projects to be assessed. The various stages of the assessment process are



as follows:

Planning

The results that can be obtained from an assessment process depend largely on the planning and methodology used. The process of assessing the Catalan universities is planned jointly by the universities and AQU every year. Transversal assessment, which involves all centres in a special field being assessed simultaneously, is favoured wherever possible. AQU enters into agreements with each university, which represent an effective system for collaboration as they specify the measures to be undertaken in each assessment (degrees, departments, services, processes). Co-ordination meetings are also held periodically at AQU in order to follow ongoing developments and guarantee the success of the assessment processes.

Methodology building in assessment has been one of the priorities of AQU since it was first established. In this respect, specific assessment guidebooks have been produced, which facilitate the work of those responsible for degree courses in the processes of constant change that the Catalan university system is subject to, as well as general frameworks, which are documents that set out theoretical aspects and good practices for assuring quality in strategic fields.

Internal assessment

This stage depends exclusively on each university. An Internal Assessment Committee (CAI) is set up by each unit being assessed, which consists of representatives of academic staff, professors, students and administration and services personnel, who receive an ad hoc training in which they examine the key aspects to be analysed according to the methodology used.

Using the data that has been collected and on the basis of observation, opinion and appraisal, the CAI draws up the internal assessment report, which is a key element in the assessment process. The report contains a description of the unit being assessed, a critical appraisal of the information gathered and a synthesis of the strong and weak points and any proposals for improvement. Once it has been drawn up, there is a hearing of the self-report in the unit being assessed. This stage takes approximately five months.

External assessment

This process depends exclusively on AQU and begins with the appointing of an External Assessment Committee (CAE) made up of professors, assessment technical personnel, students and professionals, all of whom are from outside the institution being assessed and selected according to established profiles and requirements. AQU is responsible for external assessment, and it has an extensive curriculum database of recognised academicians and professionals who can take part in external assessment committees. As long as training is a key aspect in order for the assessment process to work well, once the members of the external committees have been selected, working sessions on the institutional assessment are organised.

The CAE analyses the self-report and carries out a visit to the unit being assessed. On the basis of observation, opinion and appraisal as a result of the open meetings with different audiences (university authorities, professors, students, graduates, administration and services personnel, etc.), the EAC issues a report on the assessment process that has been followed, the quality of the unit and any possible improvements, and it also gives the unit's main quantitative indicators. This stage takes approximately three months.

Assessment reports

On the basis of the self-report and external report, the unit being assessed draws up a final report with the strong and weak points and main courses of action for improvement. The estimated time for drawing up and approving the report and for disseminating the results is four months and is contingent on the universities.

Improvement plan

The institutional assessment model is fundamentally orientated towards the improvement of units that are assessed. Once assessment has been completed, it is the degree courses, together with the corresponding bodies in the university, that establish the improvement plans.



Meta-assessment

Once the assessment process is completed, the next stage is one of reflection and analysis concerning the process itself so that improvements to the assessment plans can be proposed. AQU is responsible for this stage.

Results

The results of these assessments will be given in the corresponding annual report, which serves as an accountability document of the activities of AQU for society at large.