



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

## **Guidelines for the design and implementation of an institutional model for assessing the teaching competence of academic staff at public universities in Catalonia (second edition)**

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## Introduction

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Article 19.2 of the Catalan Universities Act (LUC) lays down that university teaching must be subject to assessment and that the universities, in conjunction with the Agency for the Quality of the University System in Catalonia (AQU Catalunya), must develop assessment methodologies and programmes for the various types of teaching staff. Article 72 of the same act also stipulates that the Executive Council of the Catalan Government may establish additional salary increments for merits in teaching.

Furthermore, Order 405/2006, of 24 October, concerning additional salary increments awarded to civil servant and non-civil servant (contracted) academic and research staff at public universities in Catalonia, lays down the corresponding regulatory environment regarding salary increments for teaching as well as research and administration applicable to academic staff as a whole. All three types of increment involve an individual and consolidated annual sum allotted by the university's social council at the proposal of the university's governing board and subject to a favourable evaluation by AQU Catalunya. In the case of merits in research, the Agency directly assesses the research merits of academic staff, whereas in the case of teaching and administration the Agency certifies the assessment made by the public universities in Catalonia.

Prior to the publication of the abovementioned Order and within the context of collaboration between the Directorate General for Universities, the public universities and AQU Catalunya, a teaching activity assessment project was set up in 2002 based on the *General criteria for assessing the teaching competence of academic staff at public universities in Catalonia*, approved by the Inter-University Council of Catalonia in December 2002, and the *Guidelines for the design and implementation of an institutional model for assessing the teaching competence of academic staff at public universities in Catalonia* (AQU Catalunya, 2003), which was based on the work of a group of experts. These guidelines served as the benchmark for universities to establish their own model to assess the teaching competence of academic staff, as set out in the respective teaching assessment handbooks.

These handbooks were subsequently certified by the AQU committee that assesses individual merits and activities (CEMAI). The teaching assessment models were applied on an experimental basis over a period of four years to establish the appropriateness and suitability of the general approach adopted. During this experimental stage and aside from the technical and logistical development required to deal with the process itself, the attention of the universities focused on two key aspects, the gradual incorporation of the different technical components of the assessment model (what is assessed, how, who, and when) and the progressive need to formalise the assessment (protocol) and adapt the quality requirements.

Following completion of the experimental stage and extensive reflection on the philosophy and approach of the adopted model, the various technical aspects and the results once the proposed designs had been applied, it became evident that the framework established in the guidelines needed to be adapted and redefined. The contents has been revised and updated, the result of which is this second edition.

In relation to the current model, the criteria applied in the certification of the handbooks have been simplified into three main groups, planning, performance and results of teaching. In addition, consideration is given to the self-evaluation report and the assessment of undergraduate and graduate satisfaction.

Within this context, it is worth mentioning the impact that the experience of assessing teaching competence in the public universities in Catalonia has had in the rest of Spain, as revealed in ANECA's DOCENTIA programme. In this respect, and considering the interest in making progress in peer review processes within the Spanish and European frameworks, x conceptual and terminological equivalents need to be established for transparency purposes, fundamentally for peer review.

The new wording of the Spanish Universities Act (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*, LOU) sees new developments regarding points of entry (recruitment/appointment) to teaching positions. With the replacement of the certification system (*habilitación*) by ex-ante accreditation, with its particular characteristics, the universities now have greater autonomy in the selection of new academic staff. The universities will therefore need to consider incorporating teaching assessment, which is covered in their handbooks, in recruitment processes.

The building of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is based, amongst other things, on the principle of quality according to which it is the institutions that have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance. Various initiatives have been implemented to stimulate the development of this, particularly the publication of *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA* by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

These standards and guidelines establish the standard for the quality assurance of teaching staff, according to which the institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. Of the guidelines that accompany the standard, special mention is made of:

The Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

For this reason, the assessment of the teaching competence of academic staff covered in the handbooks is one of the keys for establishing the level of competence and for guiding the institution's policy on qualified training.

The aim of these guidelines is for the universities to adapt their teaching assessment handbooks in accordance with the criteria established by AQU Catalunya. The first section of the guidelines contains some general considerations regarding the frame of reference adopted, the processes for verifying the universities' proposed handbooks and their subsequent

accreditation, the stakeholders, and everything concerning the technical components and the internal assessment process itself. The second part, in the form of an appendix, sets out proposals regarding the specific way that each dimension should be dealt with in the handbooks.

## I. General considerations

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### Frame of reference

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An all-inclusive approach to the assessment of academic staff in any teaching assessment model needs to include the consideration of the points of entry as well as promotion, incentives and enhancement, which are the universities' responsibility. For this reason, the universities need to ensure that the design of the model now required of them contributes to the professional development of academic staff and that it links up with their human resources policy.

A good assessment benchmark is necessary for the universities to design their own assessment models, within one same frame of reference so they can deal with periodic assessment of teaching activities with accreditation by AQU Catalunya as well as assessments for the purposes of five-year service awards, increments, awards in recognition of special merit, etc.

In the preparation of the universities assessment handbooks, use must be made of these guidelines as well as the documents listed<sup>1</sup>. In order for the model's components as defined in the guidelines to be set in place, each university will need to establish its own specific frame of reference.

### From certification/verification to the accreditation of the university's model

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<sup>1</sup> Various useful documents are:

- Regulatory environments of the Spanish Universities Act, the Catalan Universities Act, and of the university itself.
- *General criteria for assessing the teaching competence of academic staff at public universities in Catalonia* (DURSI, 2002).
- *General framework for the assessment of teaching staff* (AQU Catalunya, 2001).
- *General framework for the design, follow-up and review of curricula and study programmes* (AQU Catalunya, 2002).
- *General framework for assessing student learning* (AQU Catalunya, 2002).
- ANECA DOCENTIA programme.
- Documentation on "the state of the matter" at the international level.

The process of adapting or redefining the new teaching assessment handbook must begin with an analysis of the university's past experience. For this reason, together with the fact that, in order for the evidence for the definitive accreditation of the teaching assessment model stated in the university's corresponding handbook to be as relevant and appropriate as possible, two successive stages have been established:

## **Stage 1: certification/verification of the assessment model**

Within the framework of the content and procedures set out in the Guidelines, the university must specify its proposal and then submit it to AQU Catalunya for verification. Once the university's handbook has been certified, use must at least be made of it in relation to additional salary increments as referred to in Order 405/2006 for applications referring to December 2007.<sup>2</sup>

Certification is carried out by the CEMAI, following ex-ante verification by means of an assessment process which involves reviewers from outside the Catalan university system, under the collaboration framework established by way of agreement between AQU Catalunya and ANECA regarding the DOCENTIA programme.

## **Stage 2: accreditation (5-year validity)**

Once the certificated handbook has been used and the results of the assessments for salary increments corresponding to the 2007 call (maturity on 31 December 2007) have been processed in accordance with the provisions of Order 405/2006, a second *in situ* review or audit stage will begin (self-evaluation report and a panel of external reviewers) that, if it is positive, leads to accreditation of the model/handbook for a five-year period.

The decision regarding accreditation is made by the AQU Quality Assessment Committee, subsequent to a preliminary proposal by the CEMAI committee.

The mechanisms of supervision, pleas and appeals regarding the different actions by the internal and external committees shall arbitrate in each stage.

## **The various assessment agencies**

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Following on from the previous section, the external assessment shall be carried out, on the one hand, by AQU Catalunya's various committees and statutory bodies and, on the other, by external assessment committees that are responsible for the certification/verification of the handbooks and subsequently accreditation.

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<sup>2</sup> The university must assess the cost-benefit relationship of adopting a model aimed at teaching assessment with exclusive consequences in relation to bonus schemes, or consider other options (points of entry, promotion, etc.) where, in accordance with the new legal framework, corresponding quality assurance mechanisms will need to be established.

With regard to the internal assessment, the handbooks must specify the body and the profile of the members whose job it will be to make decisions regarding the assessment. This body is referred to as the University Assessment Committee.

## The University Assessment Committee (UAC)

From a strictly formal viewpoint, the UAC is responsible for issuing the final judgment on applications (specifically those relative to salary bonuses). The following criteria should be taken into account regarding its composition:

- The UAC's members must have a sound reputation in teaching and also an understanding of assessment processes, which are the basic components of moral authority on the subject. The UAC should also have the support and technical assistance of a special technical unit or members of the university community.
- Its members should belong to the different major disciplinary fields present in the institution and the different types of academic staff being assessed.
- The number of members should ensure compliance with the above criteria and, at the same time, allow the committee to effectively operate.
- Members from outside the institution may also be included according to the purpose and consequences of the assessment established by the institution.

Assurance must be given of both the publicity and transparency of the committee's activity and the safeguarding of candidates' interests.

The key elements in the assessment however are those that produce the first level of assessments. The document *General criteria for assessing the teaching competence of academic staff at public universities in Catalonia* (Interuniversity Council of Catalonia, 2002) points out that the significant agents in the assessment process are the teaching staff (self-evaluation report), undergraduates and graduates, academic managers and possible experts, who provide evidence and assessments that the UAC uses to ultimately issue the corresponding final assessment. Given their importance, a series of directions is given below regarding these agents.

## The teacher's self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report is the key element in the assessment process. There is a standard protocol established by the university for the content and format. Different versions are proposed according to the different times in the teacher's professional career when this is to be filled out. The reason for this is because there are different professional concerns, problems and circumstances in the various stages in a teacher's career that condition the individual's view of his/her teaching ability.

Using the proposal from the DOCENTIA programme as a benchmark, three versions are proposed: initiation version, consolidation version and a senior version.



The content of the self-evaluation report must include two types of evidence:

- Evidence in support of the teacher's merits.
- Evidence supplied by way of reflection, analysis and self-evaluation by the teacher concerned. Such evidence refers to the following points:
  - Teaching activity planning.
  - Teaching activity performance.
  - Results of teaching activity.

Finally, in view of the academic staff's prior knowledge of the assessment criteria and benchmarks adopted by the university in question, by signing the application for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, the teacher shall explicitly accept the assessment procedures and actions of the university's assessment system.

Appendix I of the Guidelines gives details for each institution to prepare their own model for the self-evaluation report.

## Assessment by undergraduates and graduates

In spite of the controversies in specialist literature concerning the reliability, validity and relevance of undergraduates and graduates (users) as reviewers of the quality of the teaching competence of academic staff, *if their involvement is properly channelled*, the students' opinions are undoubtedly a fundamental factor in a comprehensive model for assessing teaching staff.

Nevertheless, it should be made clear that the conception of undergraduate and graduate students as reviewers does not mean that their opinions automatically become a decision criterion in the case at hand, but that these should be assessed within the context of reference by academic managers and experts. The opinions of undergraduates and graduates do provide a relevant assessment of certain aspects and dimensions of the teacher's professional activity.

Appendix I of the Guidelines gives additional details on this section.

## Reports by the academic managers

The reports must include summarised assessments of the different dimensions of teaching activity (planning, performance and results of staff teaching activity) and they must be issued by different individual reviewers with governing or coordinating positions.

Once the teaching assignment defining the tasks to be carried out for each type of contract has been defined, the model developed by the university must specify the criteria used to designate and appoint the academic managers who assess formal compliance with the contract.

The universities must therefore develop specific protocols to obtain the opinion of HEI directors, degree coordinators and heads of department and/or similar posts. These protocols should

specify who is ultimately responsible for completing the reports, bearing in mind the academic and organisational context, and also the purpose of the teaching assessment.

Attention must be paid to the need for mechanisms to review the work done by the reviewers and for any conflict of interests to be avoided.

Appendix I of the Guidelines gives additional details on this section.

## The technical components of the assessment

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### Competence and excellence in teaching

A public definition of what is meant by *quality teaching*, together with the ways to recognise it is called for in general although, as many experts have pointed out, it is necessary to distinguish between *competence* and *excellence*. One must also bear in mind that excellence in teaching is linked to that of the context (it is difficult to call for an individual level of excellence in teaching when the conditions of the context — department, HEI — are not that way inclined).

Excellence, on the other hand, has more dimensions and elements than competence. Excellence implies a high degree of competence has been achieved in the development of the *teaching assignment* and in addition provides, amongst other things, evidence that points to innovation, teaching research, organisation and curriculum design, and leadership in teaching enhancement processes.

In this respect, it is useful to suggest that the assessment model should consider the possibility of establishing two levels of assessment, one where the teacher demonstrates sufficient merits of competence, and the other where, in the UAC's opinion and on the basis of pre-established criteria, the applicant's merits exceed those required to demonstrate competence. This second level, which would be *optional according to the institution's judgment*, could be a useful tool in the university's assessment system and a way of identifying good teachers for official interuniversity policies designed to promote good teaching practice.

At all events, it seems logical, as a requirement of any approach to assessment, to ask the university to make explicit the two levels for the different indicators and dimensions using the remarks and suggestions in appendix I to the Guidelines:

- **Minimum level:** minimum success standard to obtain a positive assessment.
- **Excellence:** standard of success required to be *singled out*.

Similarly, the UAC will have to establish the relevant differences regarding the different types and situations of teachers..

### Criteria and handbook score

The experience of the public universities in Catalonia shows that certified teaching assessment handbooks combine two approaches, namely, criteria and score. In the case of criteria, an

overall judgment is established for each assessment dimension (pass/does not pass, with a clear explanation of the achievements required for the assessment). With regard to the second approach, a pre-established score is allocated to each criterion. The combination of both approaches, the first to establish the levels of competence and the second to establish excellence, may prove to be of great interest.

## Minimum teaching assignment

The assessment model being proposed considers three dimensions for assessment, planning, performance and results. The question however of whether a minimum teaching activity requirement is set for assessment purposes is not a trivial one as it refers to the teaching assignment of the teacher who is being subjected to assessment. In this respect, and from a theoretical point of view, teaching assignment is understood to be a prior condition so that if the teacher is not giving classes no assessment should be made. The issue is different however in the case where, and associated with the teaching assessment, an economic bonus is allocated. During the experimental stage of applying the model, emphasis was put on the need to agree to a minimum teaching activity requirement below which an application for assessment is not permitted. A clear criterion needs to be established that can be easily applied within the context of all the universities in Catalonia, for example the setting of a threshold of 12 credits per year, with appropriate corrections according to the administrative responsibilities associated exclusively with teaching activity.

## Assessment dimensions, indicators and criteria

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Following the experience gained during the experimental stage in the universities in Catalonia, continuity in the assessment criteria is required, and three dimensions can be clearly identified:

- Teaching planning.
- Teaching performance.
- Teaching results, in terms of both acquired learning by the students and teaching enhancement (training and innovation).

There is also a clear importance for three review agents to be involved in the assessment, the teacher concerned, the academic managers and the students. For operative reasons and in order for this to be coherent with current models, the decision was made to give emphasis to the opinions of the main stakeholders in the teaching-learning process, namely, that of the teacher concerned, with the preparation of the self-evaluation report, and of the students, as specific dimensions. These three abovementioned dimensions need to be assessed by both students and academic staff, while the academic managers' assessment also needs to focus on these dimensions.

Certification of the handbooks will depend on the compliance of their content with these guidelines. This means that both the scope and criterion of competence or excellence that is adopted must be specified for each dimension.

The dimensions that must be covered in order for the handbooks to be certified are given below.

### **1. The teacher's self-evaluation report**

- This must contain the indicators given in the Guidelines and the decisions of the reviewers in charge of the assessment, as proof of the teacher's compliance with the criterion for the salary increment awarded by the regional authorities.
- The university's model must specify the quality criteria for the assessment.

### **2. Course planning**

- This must contain the indicators given in the Guidelines, the sources of information and the quality criteria for the assessment.
- For the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, a positive assessment by the reviewers is required of the content.

### **3. Professional development and performance**

- This must contain the indicators given in the Guidelines, the sources of information, the agents and the quality criteria for the assessment.
- For the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, a positive assessment by the reviewers is required of the content.

### **4. Assessment of teaching outcomes**

- This must include the reference levels, the sources of information and those responsible for making the assessment.
- For the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, a positive assessment by the reviewers is required of the content.

### **5. Assessment of undergraduate and graduate satisfaction**

- This must include the reference levels, the sources of information and those responsible for making the assessment.
- For the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, a positive assessment by the reviewers is required of the content.

## **1. The teacher's self-evaluation report**

The self-evaluation report, the content and format of which shall be set by the university in a standard protocol proposed in the Guidelines, is the key part to the teaching assessment process. The university will have to give instructions to academic staff on how this is to be filled

out and submitted, with special attention being paid to the regulations on teaching assignment content, tasks associated with teaching, and official accreditation of evidence provided.

It would be appropriate for different versions of the self-evaluation report to be prepared according to the different stage in the teacher's career. As is mentioned above, three main groups need to be differentiated due to the fact that concerns and motivations vary during the different stages of the teacher's professional career:

- Initiation version: aimed at academic staff in the first five years of their teaching career.
- Consolidation version: aimed at academic staff with a career in teaching lasting between six and fifteen years.
- Senior version: aimed at academic staff with a career in teaching for more than fifteen years.

The contents of the self-evaluation report must include two types of evidence:

- Evidence, in the form of a *curriculum vitae*, that supports the teacher's merits in regard to the different dimensions and indicators included in the assessment. The evidence should be accredited under the terms established in the university's assessment model.
- Evidence provided by way of reflection, analysis and self-evaluation by the teacher concerned. Such evidence shall refer to the following points:
  - The planning of teaching activities.
  - The development of teaching activities.
  - The outcomes of teaching activities.

The university must develop specific rules to establish who is responsible for assessing the self-evaluation report. Self-evaluation reports will contain information for the different reviewers, i.e. the heads of the teacher's programme, department and HEI, etc.

From past experience in the universities in Catalonia, there is a clear need for the qualitative information resulting from the analysis of the self-evaluation reports to be managed, as it provides evidence that can contribute to improvements in the institution, and this flow of information should be incorporated in the setting and review of quality assurance mechanisms. The possibility, for example, of the UAC drawing up specific reports should therefore be considered.

The reviewers' positive assessment of the content of the self-evaluation report is a minimum requirement for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities.

Appendix I of the Guidelines gives more directions on preparing a protocol for the self-evaluation report.

## 2. Course planning

The university's handbook must propose a protocol for assessing course planning. In this same section, and within the context of assessment for the award of a teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, the possibility of incorporating elements relative to teaching complexity (for example, the amount of teaching carried out on the basis of the teaching assignment taken on by the teacher during the five-year period) must be provided for.

In the case of course planning, assessment is required of the following indicators:

- **2.1. Course syllabus design.** The university will require a protocol to establish that the course syllabus conforms to the stipulated basic structure and contents.
- **2.2. The suitability of the course syllabus.** The protocol must contain points on the suitability of the aims, teaching methodology, activities and anticipated learning outcomes, student work load, and assessment criteria and methods.
- **2.3. The resources and teaching material.** A protocol is also required to assess these.

The main reviewers may either be experts from the university itself or external experts or academic managers.

Positive assessment of this dimension is a requirement for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities.

## 3. Professional development and performance

It firstly needs to be clarified that the proposed use of this dimension refers particularly to the teacher's professional development, whereas the teacher's performance or actual carrying out of the teaching activity is based on the results of the assessment made by the students and academic managers.

An assessment is therefore necessary of the following indicators:

- **3.1. Assessment of training and professional development.** The university (through the institute of educational science, ICE, for example) must define the disciplinary and specific teaching requirements for training actions to be accredited as such.
- **3.2. Assessment of specific innovation projects.** The university must also consider projects included in official *ad hoc* invitations for applications and entailing specific funding. Aside from the existence of innovation projects, the assessment of the results is also of special significance.
- **3.3. Assessment of particularly outstanding work.** In order to determine the levels of excellence, particularly significant actions may be assessed, such as participation in activities aimed at teaching enhancement, specific activities relative to implementation of the EHEA, and activities aimed at promoting and assessing teaching quality. The university is required to prepare a preliminary catalogue of actions and tasks that will

need to be adapted to the different types and disciplines of academic staff. In addition, in order to establish the levels of excellence, a catalogue of evidence will be required and the proposed rating associated with each action.

- **3.4. Assessment of the external recognition of teaching quality.** By way of teaching publications, awards and distinctions for teaching, invitations to teach at other universities, etc. The type of academic staff and disciplinary fields will again qualify the judgments.

The university must establish the level of achievement for each indicator to obtain an overall positive assessment of the dimension. Positive assessment of this dimension is a requirement for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities.

## 4. Assessment of teaching outcomes

This dimension considers the results from the student's learning point of view (academic results), as well as enhancement in the teacher's teaching activity (training and innovation).

In relation to the outcomes from the student learning point of view, this dimension is particularly sensitive to inappropriate approaches and benchmarks that do not fit the context. The university therefore needs to establish guide margins according to the different course years, degree programme, subjects, etc.

The evidence provided in the teacher's self-evaluation report on this indicator, which is set out in the self-evaluation report protocol, is of two types: *a*) the evidence referring to the details of awarded qualifications, and *b*) the teacher's assessment or interpretation of this information (bearing in mind the circumstances and characteristics of the course and the students themselves).

It is the responsibility of the person designated by the institution as head of the academic programme to *validate* and *assess* both types of evidence. This agent's knowledge of the overall situation in the degree programme, as well as the specific situation of the type of subjects/courses given, must serve as the context for benchmarks that are set.

There are several possible choices available for establishing benchmarks for positive assessment:

- An absolute value (for example, a success rate or performance rate).
- A statistical criterion (a given value for the standard deviation from the mean of previous rates). in this case, different means could be considered according to the type, discipline or the organisational unit that the person belongs to.
- The progression of results over the teaching period being assessed.
- If appropriate, the university must establish the minimum criteria according to the types of subjects and disciplines, based on a prior accepted agreement.



- Assessment of this indicator as a criterion of excellence should only be allowed if the assessment of the students' achievements is carried out with the involvement of agents other than the teacher in question.
- The reviewers should be the academic managers.

Positive assessment of this dimension is a requirement for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities.

## 5. Assessment of undergraduate and graduate satisfaction

The students are the beneficiaries of teaching and their opinion is consequently fundamental in any comprehensive model of assessment such as the one envisaged here, and the university must establish the necessary mechanisms to incorporate this into the model. It has become increasingly evident that a reliable and valid approach to assessing student satisfaction calls for the use of various different strategies that reflect the diversity of users and teaching situations, and it is a mistake to adopt an assessment decision (for example, the granting or not of a salary increment awarded by the regional authorities) on the sole basis of a numerical result from a survey.

Positive assessment of this dimension is a minimum requirement for the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities

Appendix I of the Guidelines gives more directions for developing this dimension.

### Final remark

For the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities, the model stipulates that compensation between criteria is not possible once the minimum criteria have been established.



## **II. Appendix I: Proposed contents of the university teaching assessment model**

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### **A. The institution's policy on teaching staff assessment**

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The universities must specifically state in the handbook the aims and institutional policy concerning the teaching assessment of academic staff. Aside from the granting of salary increments awarded by the regional authorities, the teaching assessment model has other aims (points of entry, promotion, etc.). Subjects such as the following therefore need to be dealt with:

- Approaches in the assessment regarding points of entry to the university and the enhancement and promotion of academic staff, plus the stipulation of this in the statutes.
- Assessment of the quality of academic staff within the general framework of the institution's quality policy.

### **B. Assessment of academic staff as an incentive to good practice**

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Going beyond the provisions of Order 405/2006, the university shall make any contributions it considers appropriate to establish its own specific frame of reference. Aspects such as the possible connections between this assessment process and other decisions concerning the academic staff need to be spelt out.

### **C. The general process and its agents**

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#### **Scope of application**

The handbook must specify which academic staff is to be assessed, in accordance with the teaching assignment criteria, type of courses given, circumstances, etc.

#### **Assessment process**

The teaching assessment handbook must specify:

- The stages in the process, from the application for assessment to the results given.
  - In the case of the teaching salary increment awarded by the regional authorities:

- Completion of the application form and the candidate's self-evaluation report.
  - The application itinerary.
  - The deadlines and calendar.
  - Quality assurance in handling the process.
  - Mechanisms to safeguard the individual's rights.
- The sources and procedures for gathering information on teaching activity.
  - The teacher's assessment protocol or file that concludes with the assessment report.
  - Where applicable, the mechanisms to appeal/review the results of the assessment.
  - The dissemination of the results of the teaching assessment (contents and those responsible), with the corresponding mechanisms to safeguard the rights of assessees.

## Reviewers

In the procedure, the universities must define the composition of the review committees and the mechanisms for publicity. In addition, the criteria for designating and appointing the members, the internal rules of procedure, the assessment reports, mechanisms to review the work of the reviewers, and stipulation of who is responsible all need to be established.

The handbook must specify which agent or agents are responsible for each dimension in the review.

## Self-evaluation report (initiation version)

When filling out the self-evaluation report, the teacher concerned must assess and reflect on course planning and teaching performance, with consideration being given to:

- The teaching conditions.
- Coordination and work with other teachers.
- Study time of students.
- The results achieved by the students.

The dimensions to be assessed are as follows:

### Teaching activity planning

- Review of the conditions for teaching in which the candidate has taught during the period under analysis. Consideration must be given to the different teaching activities

carried out, settings (classrooms, laboratories, seminars, workshops, etc.), characteristics of the student groups (number, previous studies) and other variables that may have affected planning.

- Review of how activities have been coordinated with other staff teaching on the same or similar courses, and with teachers from other departments. The costs and benefits need to be analysed, together with the problems associated with teaching coordination.
- Review of administration carried out by the university, HEI or department in relation to the teacher's teaching activities (procedure for choosing, timetables, etc.).
- Review of curricula and study plans covered by the teacher's teaching activity. Mention of the positive aspects and structural shortcomings in relation to the subjects, courses and modules, timetables, the number of allocated credits, etc. Are the teaching activities given by the teacher in the educational curriculum in the right place?
- Review of authorship/responsibility in the planning of teaching activities carried out by the teacher.
- Review of the course planning document established by the university or HEI (teaching guide, course programme or similar). Indication of the possibilities and difficulties in maintaining the teaching activities being given.

#### **Development of teaching activity**

- Review of teaching activity development in relation to the students' characteristics. Assessment of the students' prior knowledge, class attendance, dedication (in terms of ECTS), the importance of self study, etc.
- Review of the teacher's own teaching plans, guides and programmes. Analysis of the appropriateness of aims, activities, methodologies, resources, assessment systems and calendars.
- Review of the teacher's personal performance (strong and weak points).

#### **Results**

- Review of the student's level of development according to the competences established in the curriculum and course planning. Consideration must be given to the academic results achieved (exam rates; students who did not pass the subject, course or similar; pass rates, number of higher grades and excellents, etc.).
- Review of the students views regarding teaching activities they have taken, for example use of the institution's surveys.
- Review of the level of satisfaction in relation to the teacher's ideas regarding teacher training (training actually received, shortcomings detected, etc.). Analysis and assessment of innovations carried out in teaching and improvements incorporated.

## Self-evaluation report (consolidation version)

When filling out the self-evaluation report, the teacher concerned must assess and reflect on course planning and teaching activity, with consideration being given to:

- The conditions for developing teaching.
- Study time of students.
- The results achieved by the students.
- Individual prospects at the HEI.
- Personal training requirements.

The dimensions to be assessed are as follows:

### Teaching activity planning

- Assessment of teaching activity, pointing out the strong points, weak points and associated proposals for improvement to be dealt with by the department, dean, rector's office, etc. Consideration should be given to the following:
  - Criteria for selecting the subject and incorporation into the individual's research or professional speciality.
  - Observations on the broad outlines of the teaching organisation of the subject and the form/s of this organisation.
  - Coordination with other teachers.
  - Broad outlines and elements to be considered when designing the educational curriculum (aims of the syllabus, prior knowledge of students, competences to be attained by the students in the subject, time, resources, etc.).
  - Main points of view on which the teaching practice is based: reflection on the process of preparing the subject and justification for the content and activities.

### Development of teaching activity

- Assessment of teaching activity, pointing out the strong points, weak points and associated proposals for improvement to be dealt with by the department, dean, rector's office, etc. Consideration should be given to the following:
  - Factors influencing fulfilment of the subject programme, course programme and the activities carried out.
  - Interaction with the students in the classroom and facilities and difficulties that exist for them to participate in the learning process. Reference must be made to the students' level of interest in class, how their interest develops throughout the

year, and possible actions for motivating them (seminars, workshops, lectures). Mention must be made of tutorials and other forms of student involvement.

- Assessment procedures: reasons for selecting certain procedures instead of others, usefulness in assessing the activities carried out by the students during the year.

## Results

- Assessment of the academic results (outcomes) achieved by students and the degree to which they progress in the subject, together with the competences in which students have made most progress. Special mention must be made of the strong points, weak points and proposals for improvement in relation to:
  - Development of learning by the students. Special mention must be made of whether these reviews have involved changes in the teaching methodology.
  - Particular difficulties in teaching work and other external factors (number of students, learning settings such as classrooms, laboratories and seminars, etc.).
  - Updating of the contents of the subject, courses and modules, by means of continuous study, updating of the methodology, participation in innovation projects and teaching enhancement.

## Self-evaluation report (senior version)

On filling out the self-evaluation report, the teacher must assess and reflect on his/her course planning and teaching activity, with consideration being given to:

- The results of the programme.
- The conditions of work and training of young academic staff.
- Development of the course and prospects.

The dimensions to be assessed are as follows:

### Quality of learning and results

- Assessment of the academic results (outcomes) achieved by students and the degree to which they progress in the subject, together with the competences in which students have made most progress. Mention must be made of trends in the results of students over the five-year period and proposals made for actions for improvement.
- Overall assessment of learning acquired by the students, with an overall analysis of the teaching activities as a whole given in association with the programme.

### Support for teacher training

- Assessment of the conditions of work and training of young academic staff in the department or HEI. Consideration of training possibilities and shortcomings, on which to establish approaches for dealing with training. Mention must be made of the way in which staff with more teaching experience can contribute to enhancing the training of junior academic staff.

### Development and prospects

- Assessment of teaching performance through an analysis of the development, pathway and significant changes experienced in the period being assessed (five years). On the basis of this development, reflections must be included concerning the organisation and coordination of teaching, content prioritisation, activities, etc.
- Proposed changes to be incorporated in the future regarding teaching activities from an institutional perspective.

## Institutional surveys on teaching assessment by students

The model must incorporate an assessment of undergraduate and, where applicable, graduate satisfaction. Students often criticise the limited impact of their views on academic staff, a reason why many do not participate in surveys. Their opinion is however increasingly important in the assessment of teaching activity and competence.

Issues that refer to course assessment (content, usefulness, appropriateness in the curriculum, etc.), which are often not the responsibility of teacher giving a course, should not be confused with specific issues to do with the teacher's performance (attention to students, suitability of teaching strategies — depending on the number of students and the physical characteristics and resources in the classroom —, type of learning activities, assessment criteria, acquired learning, etc.).

On the other hand, consideration must be given to the diversity and influence of the different major disciplinary fields, the nature of the subjects (from the teaching standpoint) and the conditions in which they are taught. This is why the most appropriate content includes general and homogenous features, as well as specific features deriving from the distinctive situations established in order to deal with the diversity.

When these surveys are being carried out, teaching is quite logically and appropriately assessed once the job has been finished, in other words, after the learning outcome is made known. Nevertheless, this raises various problems concerning both the logistics and the contents of the survey. At all events, it is inappropriate for a teacher to be assessed when a significant part of his/her teaching work still remains to be completed.

## Reports and minutes of *ad hoc* groups

The class group may express its opinion through the students' representatives on pre-established or other matters of special interest to the group, in conformity with and under the supervision of the corresponding academic bodies and authorities. Such opinions/evaluations must be expressed in a duly completed (signed and registered) protocol, which forms a report on teaching or any other matter that the group wishes to express its opinion on.

## Deferred assessments by undergraduates and graduates

One well-founded criticism levelled against opinion polls is that they are carried out “in the heat of the moment”, i.e., just when the students have finished taking a particular subject (especially when matters to do with the academic assessment or qualifications are included). It is argued that at such a time students lack the necessary perspective to provide an accurate assessment. That is why *deferred assessments* have been suggested. These could be carried out the following academic year, when the students have moved on to another stage of study, when they finish studying, or even in follow-up studies and the assessment of training during their professional careers. This could be adopted as a strategy for identifying excellence among teaching staff.

## Reports by the academic managers

There is broad consensus that an assessment model focusing on the substantial aspects of teaching requires the main assessment agent to be an *expert and peer*. While teaching assessment surveys by students were the norm in the seventies and eighties, during the nineties the idea gained ground that teaching staff, as peers and experts, should be involved in assessing teaching competence.

In the current university context, it appears to be necessary above all to involve academic managers in the assessment process. It is true that certain contents are difficult to assess, even for academic managers, and what is required is *specific knowledge*. Each university must look at the characteristics of its own academic managers and find other potential assessors within the university, or from outside, who can make up for any weaknesses.

Attention must be paid to the need for mechanisms to review the work done by reviewers and also to avoid any conflict of interests.

Lastly, from the experience gained during the experimental stage, there is clearly the need for more discriminatory elements in the reports issued by academic managers, as a certain trend towards non-differentiation and the generalisation of satisfactory judgments has been observed. However, the deans of HEIs and the heads of department have documentary evidence (minutes of coordination meetings, students' complaints, reports) that should also be considered in the assessment of the teaching competence of academic staff.