

# PROFILES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TAKING PART IN TEACHING STAFF AND INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

## Introduction

One of the fundamental principles underpinning the European guidelines and standards is transparency in the appointment of external experts in quality assurance processes.

According to standard 2.4 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG):

*External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).*

The guidelines behind this standard point out that at the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the Agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.

In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they

- are carefully selected;
- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.

The Agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no conflict of interest.

The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.

Accordingly, when designing the methodology, three stages should be distinguished in the set up of assessment committees and/or the appointment of cooperating persons:

- Determining the profile of the experts within the framework of each project.
- Determining the criteria for selecting external persons within the framework of each project.
- Determining the general criteria for the assessment/valuation of the experts.

## Profiles and requirements for taking part in teaching staff and institutional assessment processes

Regardless of the committee on which they are taking part, **all members** of committees or all persons cooperating with AQU Catalunya are required to offer the following elements:

- availability to participate in and take on the specific activities of the committees responsibly;
- knowledge and acceptance of the reference framework for each project; failing this, AQU Catalunya will provide the necessary training;
- commitment, undertaken by the assessor to adhere to: all the principles of action, the values and the code of ethics of AQU Catalunya; the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area; and, the information security and quality policy of AQU Catalunya.

### General assessor selection criteria

Generally speaking, the following criteria have been established for the various assessor profiles:

#### Academic profile

Academics must be members of the university's teaching and research staff and possess acknowledged standing as PhD teaching staff. It is desirable for them to be full professors.

It is advisable for them to have held a position of authority on the university's governing bodies and, as a result, for them to be acquainted with university management. Experience in institutional assessment processes would be an advantage.

It is desirable for candidates from the Spanish university system to have successfully completed two research activity assessments (sexennials) or to hold similar credentials.

In order to be a degree programme assessor, it is necessary to possess academic, institutional or management experience.

In order to be a teaching staff assessor, it is necessary to meet the requirements set by the Research Assessment Committee (CAR).

Two profiles are distinguished for teaching staff assessment processes: assessment committee members and assessment committee assessors.

## Committee members

In accordance with current regulations,<sup>1</sup> members of the Research Assessment Committee (CAR) and the specific committees thereof must have one of the following profiles:

1. be official or contracted full professors (CU, CC);
2. be official or tenured assistant professors on permanent contracts (TU, AGR);
3. be an active research staff member in Catalonia in a similar category to the above;
4. be an academic with acknowledged international standing (or similar teaching and research staff member [PDI]).

They must have completed three or more research sexennials or have been awarded research distinctions.

## Committee assessors

In the case of the assessors for the specific committees of the Research Assessment Committee, the following requirements have been approved:

| Category                         | Assessor profile             | Externally assessed research periods |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tenure-track lecturer reports    | CU, CC, TU, AGR, similar PDI | Two or more                          |
| Research accreditations          | CU, CC, TU, AGR, similar PDI | Three or more                        |
| Advanced research accreditations | CU, CC, similar PDI          | Three or more                        |
| Research sexennials              | CU, CC, TU, AGR, similar PDI | Three or more                        |

Under exceptional circumstances where there is a lack of experts in fields of knowledge with a shortfall in specialists, the required number of sexennials may be lowered.

## Professional profile

Professionals must have acknowledged standing and it is desirable for them to have a professional track record spanning five years or more.

## Student profile

Students must have recently graduated or be currently following a master's degree, a PhD or the final years of a bachelor's degree in the field of knowledge to which the assessment applies.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 12.4 of Act 15/2015, of 21 July, on Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya.

## Methodology-specialist secretary profile

Secretaries in this category must be persons working in a technical assessment unit, a quality agency or similar and must possess proven expertise in institutional assessment. They may also be academics who specialise in assessment methodology or have taken part in a substantial number of assessments.

## General criteria for the composition of committees

Members must meet the requirements set out in current regulations:

- AQU Catalunya must ensure diversity in the background of its members in terms of geographical scope within the Catalan university system. Moreover, it should also take into consideration the involvement of experts from both public and private universities.
- It is necessary to encourage the involvement of experts from other national and international university systems.
- It is necessary to achieve gender equality wherever possible.
- It is necessary to ensure most committee members are not associated with the universities involved in the project to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Consideration will be given to a prior valuation whenever an expert has already taken part on AQU Catalunya committees.

Moreover, in the case of assessment committees, universities will be entitled to report to AQU Catalunya if any of the members of those committees is identified as having a conflict of interest in performing the assessment.

The composition of the committees in terms of number of members and profile diversity will depend on each specific project. Accordingly, in the case of assessment committees, each one may be formed by academic staff, professionals, methodology specialists, technical staff (technical quality units or agency staff) and students. The overall profile of these members must ensure they have suitable professional and/or academic expertise in the specific discipline under assessment to guarantee consistency in the assessments in this respect.