

Fostering the equity agenda in quality assurance: the development of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) indicator system in Catalonia

INQAAHE 17th Biennial Conference 2023

Anna Prades Nebot – aprades@aqu.cat

José Luis Mateos González – jlmateos@aqu.cat



Summary

1. Equity in HE: a growing policy concern
2. Re-imagining quality in HE: the inclusion of DEI
3. The EQUITA22 Project: measuring equity in the Catalan University System (SUC)
4. What can EQA do to foster equity agendas? Quality as transformation

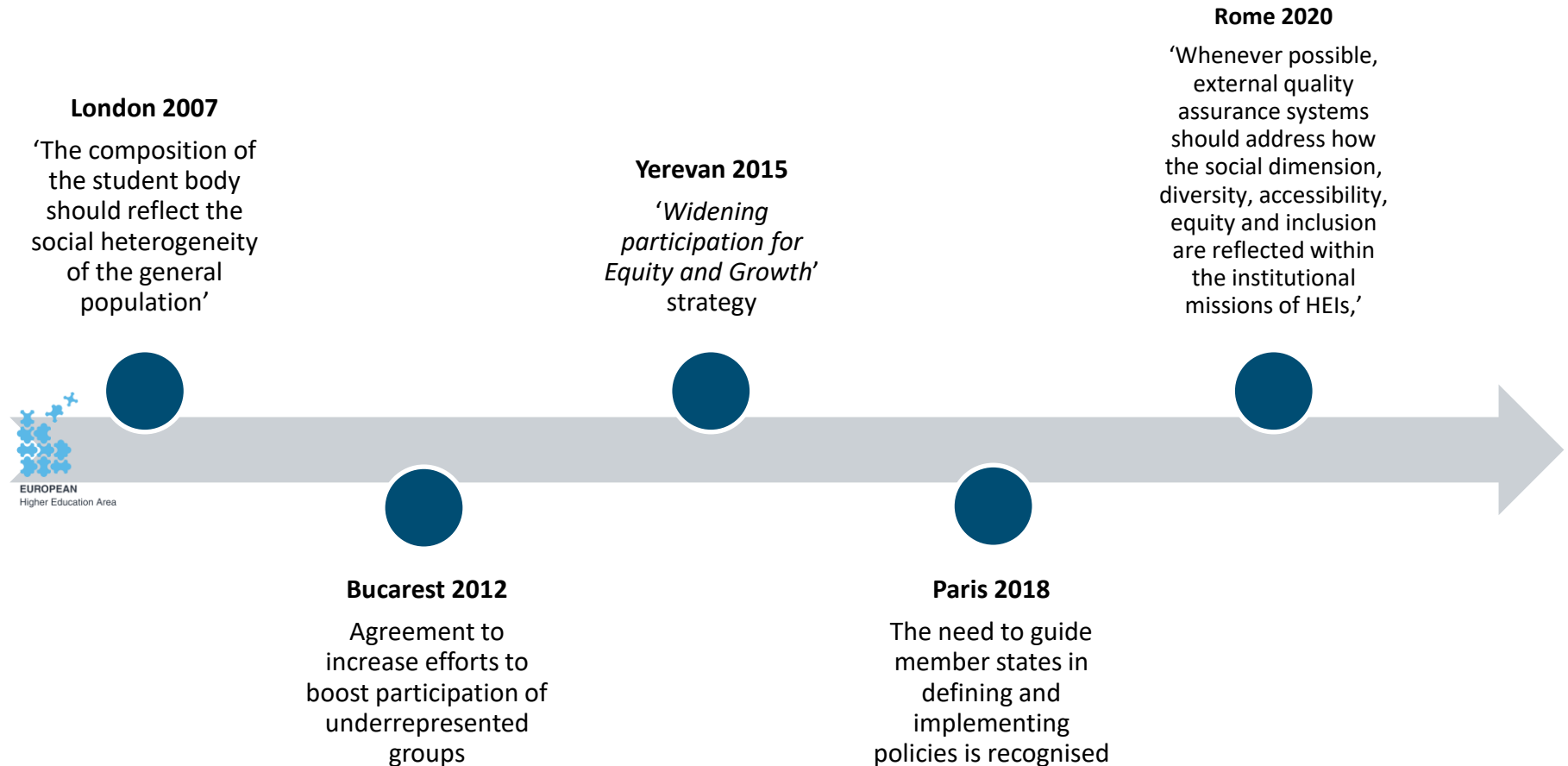
Equity in HE: a growing policy concern

- > Although not a new phenomenon, there is a **renewed sense of urgency** to address inequities in **access, attainment, and outcomes of HE** (UN- SDGs, 2015; UNESCO, 2022)
- > **International consensus** that these inequities are ubiquitous (c.f. Boliver 2011 for the UK; Bonneau et al. 2022 for France, or Liu 2016 for China)
- > It is believed that HE may play a critical role in providing **solutions to societal problems**: ‘enhance [learners’] prospects of employment and stimulate them to be active citizens’ (EHEA Paris Communiqué 2018)
- > Catalonia is no different: the Catalan Agreement for the Knowledge Society recognizes **the need to improve equity in HE.**

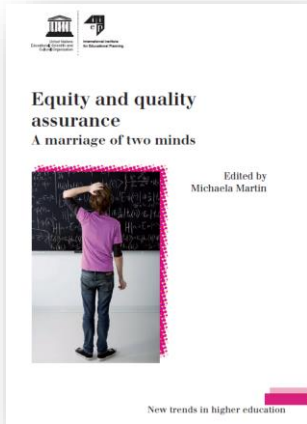


Re-imagining quality in HE: the inclusion of DEI in the EHEA

► EHEA ministerial conferences have been politically recognising the need to address educational inequalities



The link between EQA and DEI is neither new nor exclusively European: international examples



- > Research conducted by Michaela Martin and colleagues (2010) shows that several EQA systems are linked, more or less explicitly, to **national equity policies**. QA agencies in countries such as **South Africa, Brazil, India or Australia** include equity in their standards and quality criteria.
- > These countries have **equity policy agendas** that have trickled down into their **quality models**. E.g. standards make explicit reference to: The reduction of regional inequalities, Targets for recruitment from equity groups, Appropriateness of teaching and learning for these groups.

> CHEA's global survey about equity and QA (2022), presented at the WHEC 2022, showed that:

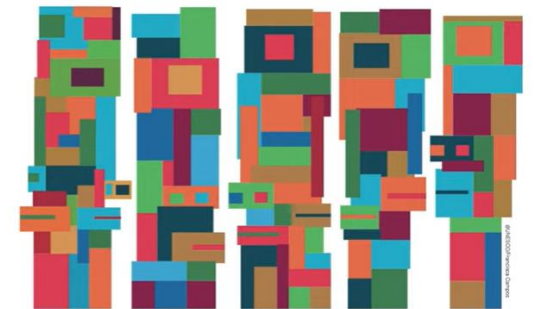
- DEI is not yet a high priority in the HE policy agenda of many countries, but there is a growing consensus about the legitimate mandate in integrating DEI considerations in their evaluation.
- EQAPs/networks such as INQAAHE should proactively to formulate a clear definition of what DEI should mean for QA externally or internally, including the need to define "target equity groups" that are relevant to specific country contexts.

Roundtable: Addressing equity processes with international accrediting organization

WHEC
2022

Barcelona, Spain
18-20 May

UNESCO
World Higher
Education
Conference



Axes of inequality



- > Gender
- > Social class
- > Ethnicity
- > Migrant status
- > Disability \ Neurodiversity
- > Mature students
- > Family structure (e.g. single parenthood)



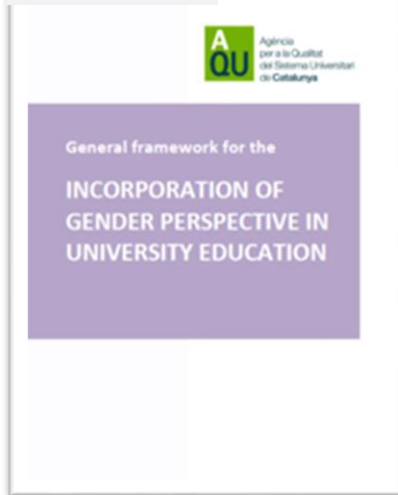
Article 28.1 of Law 17/2015, on effective equality of women and men, calls on universities to "introduce the mainstreaming of the gender perspective (...) in the curriculum of bachelor degrees and postgraduate programmes". And it also establishes that: gender must be mainstreamed in the external quality assurance processes.

Embedding Gender perspective in QA procedures

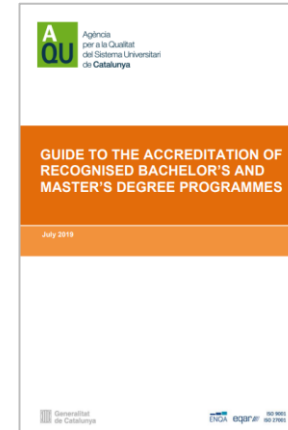


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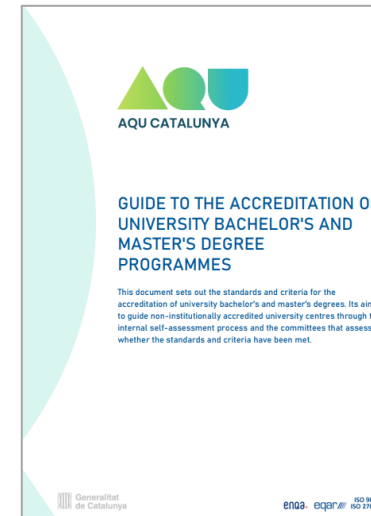
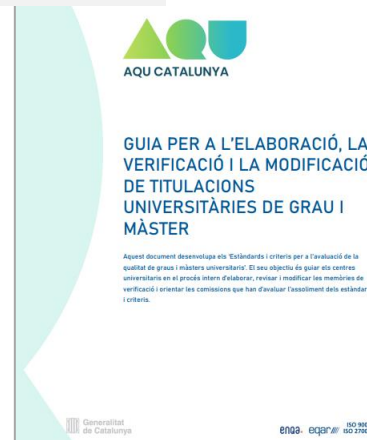
2018



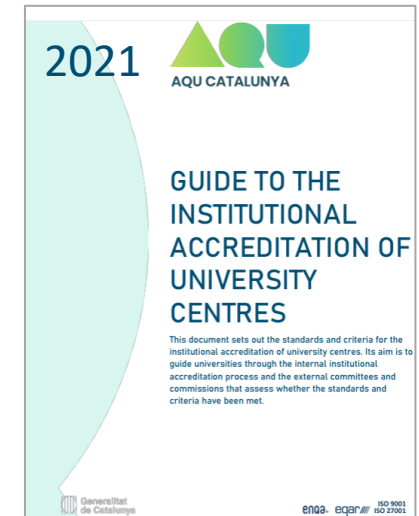
2019



2022



2021



I. ANNEX. THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

1. Quality of the training programme
2. Relevance of public information
3. Efficacy of the internal quality assurance system.....
4. Suitability of teaching staff
5. Effectiveness of learning support systems
6. Quality of outcomes

Curriculum

- Type of subject/disciplines in which the gender perspective is incorporated: significant contributions to the study programme content (core subjects, optional subjects, mentions and specialisms, etc.).
- Production of materials incorporating the gender perspective.
- Skills and learning outcomes.
- Teaching resources (bibliography).
 - Equality within the teaching staff structure.
 - Equality in the assignment of teaching schedules.
 - Training of teaching staff in gender mainstreaming (teaching and research).
 - Consideration of gender bias in mechanisms for assessing teaching staff.



- > **Output: indicator catalogue** to measure (in)equity in Catalan higher education.
 - At different levels of aggregation: **system, HEI, and department/school.**
 - Focus on data availability: distinction between **desirable** and **possible** indicators.

- > **Methodology; group of external experts:**
 - 3 academics with research experience on educational inequalities (Dr. Helena Troiano, Dr. César Guadalupe and Dr. Héctor Cebolla)
 - 2 administrative data experts: **Uneix** (Carina Álvarez), the Catalan universities' administrative database, and **Idescat** (Dr. Clara Viñas), the Catalan Statistical Institute (population-level data).
 - Plenary and thematic meetings where catalogue drafts are discussed;

- > **Additional outputs (Q4 2023):** publicly available dashboard and KPIs for HEIs to monitor their social dimension.

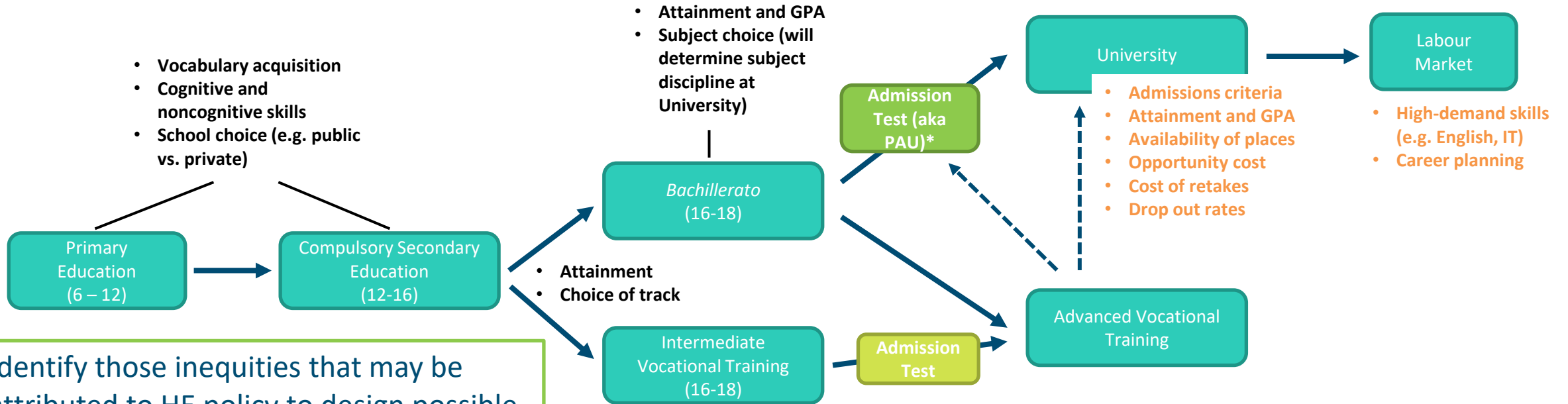
Key concepts in EQUITA22

- > What do we aim to measure? both **equity of access** and **equity of outcomes**, ‘which refers to the opportunities of students to progress and successfully complete a programme’ (Martin 2010, p. 26).
- > Indicators cover key stages of the HE student life-cycle:



- > We emphasise the role played by **subject discipline**. Certain degree subjects are more socially selective for two key reasons:
 - **High-demand subjects** are more **academically selective**.
 - **High-risk programmes** (Troiano et al. 2019).
- > Identification of those indicators that can be the **object of HE policy**.

(Some) examples of how inequalities impact trajectories (in orange, those object of HE policy)



Identify those inequities that may be attributed to HE policy to design possible interventions:

- Inclusive Teaching & Learning?
- Expansion of highly selective courses?
- Cost reform?
- Retention policies?
- Targeted career support?

* **University Admission Score**

Bachillerato:

- *Bachillerato* GPA (60%) + PAU (40%)
- **PAU:**
 - Common part** (0-10 points)
 - Specific part** (optional, 4 additional points)

Advanced Vocational Training:

- GPA (0-10 points)
- The student can improve their score by taking the **specific part** of PAU (optional, 4 additional points to their GPA)

- **Choice of specific part subjects (determines access to subject disciplines)**
- **Performance in PAU**

Measurable axes of inequality in Catalonia

We have considered the **axes below**. Based on data availability, we have selected the characteristics in **green**, followed by its possible measurement:

- > **Gender:** binary sex
- > **Social class:** often operationalised using parental occupation, income and education. Due to data availability and homogenization: **parental level of education**. This characteristic is consistently reported as capturing most variance by social origin (Shavit & Blossfeld 1993, Breen & Muller 2020).
- > **Mature students:** age of HE students.
- > **Ethnicity and migrant status:** official ethnoracial classifications do not exist in Spain. It is also difficult to detect 1.5 generation students (who were born overseas but arrived in Catalonia before entering the educational system [approx. 7 years old) and 2nd generation migrants.
- > **Disability:** highly-sensitive data (special category data under GDPR), not available.
- > **Family structure (e.g. single parenthood):** Idescat could construct, *ad hoc*, data at the population level but this data is not recorded when entering HE.

Examples of indicators designed so-far

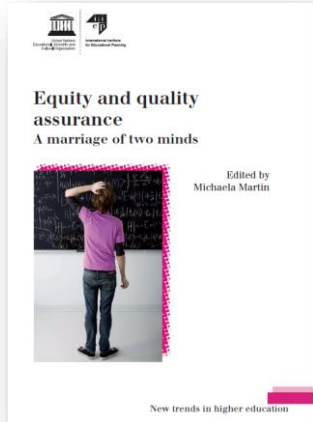
All indicators are calculated for gender, social class, and mature students, unless specified otherwise.

Indicator name	Description	Level of aggregation	Object of HE Policy
% Access rate to a first degree (1)	% of people of a given equity axis accessing HE for the first time	System-level	No (captures previous inequalities)
% Access rate to a first degree (2)	% of people with the necessary qualifications of a given equity axis accessing HE for the first time	System-level	Yes
% high-risk choice	% of prospective students with similar qualifications of a given equity axis that choose a high-risk programme (high drop-out rates and long completion times)	System-level	Yes
% students with low parental education	% of enrolled students with low parental education	System-level/HEIs/Departments-Schools	Yes

Example of indicator description

Indicator number:	1.1
Name:	Rate of access for the first time to a first degree (ISCED-6) by parental education
Description:	Proportion of young people (max. 24 yo) that access a first degree in a given academic year, by the highest level of education of their parents/tutors
Formula	$\sum_{age=16,\dots,24} \frac{N \text{ of students that access a first degree for the first time}_{age,parental\ education}}{Population_{age,parental\ education}} \cdot 100$
What population we use in the denominator?	Young population of the same age with parents with the same level of education
Level of disaggregation	University system
Observations and references	We use parental education as a proxy of social origin as research shows that this is the variable that captures more variance (Shavit & Blossfeld 1993, Breen & Muller 2020)
Data availability (sources):	Idescat: parental education by age at the population level allows the proxy calculation of theoretical parents/tutors. Uneix: first-degree, first-year students by age and parental education (available data).
Interpretation:	Inequalities that the educational system accumulates, including access to the university system.
Comments:	This indicator may be misinterpreted as an indicator of inequality of access to university. In reality, it detects inequalities that are accumulated throughout the educational system.
Object of HE policy:	No.

Conclusion (with regards to the role of EQA in DEI) and contributions of the project

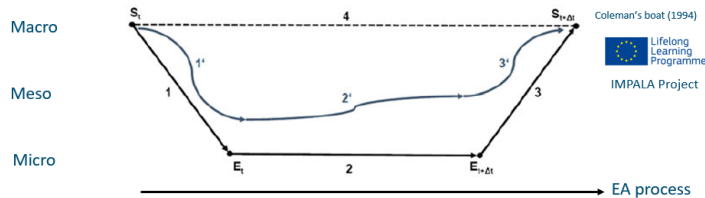


WHILE “EQA systems are not primarily geared towards monitoring the implementation of national equity policies, since (...) their main objective is to ensure certain standards across provision of higher Education”



EQA systems have the potential to be used as monitoring mechanism for the implementation of equity concerns

- in countries which have strong policy frameworks in place (...),
- and provided that QA agencies exploit audit reports with this objective in mind.



WHY?

1. EQA is based in the SAR
2. The analysis of the self-report crystallizes into actions in the institutions' Improvement plan
3. Public reporting on assessment outcomes incentivize positive action

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EQUITA22

1. Quality assurance needs evidence
2. Stakeholder agreement on what needs to be measured
3. Public accountability and benchmarking

1. Situational mechanisms (macro level)	2. Action formation mechanisms (micro) From intent to action	3. Transformational mechanisms (macro) From actions to processes/structures
Legal framework Guidelines Policies	Self assessment report: analysis, discussions, reflections Site visit: impressions, discussions, reflections External report: reflections...	Improvement plan: Changes (curriculum, program, institution)



Thank you!

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