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Dublin, 14 July 2017

Subject: Membership of the AQU Catalunya in ENQA

Dear Mr. Casadesús Fa,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 21 June 2017, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm the AQU Catalunya membership of ENQA for five years from that date.

The ENQA Board concluded that AQU Catalunya is in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and the Board would like to receive a follow-up report on the recommendations in the panel report (as outlined in the annex attached) within two years of its decision, i.e. by June 2019.

In addition, the Board recommends that you consider taking advantage of the new ENQA procedure, i.e. a progress visit. The visit would take place after the submission of the follow-up report, in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the [Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews](#).

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of membership of AQU Catalunya.

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, AQU Catalunya is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

It is recommended that the agency further reflects on the balance between external and internal quality assurance, provided the agency wants to move towards an external quality assurance system which is fundamentally based on institutional accreditation.

It is recommended that the agency considers the implications of the close involvement of active HEI representatives in the work of the agency. In particular, the impact upon the independence compared to the involvement of more neutral but equally competent stakeholders from other jurisdictions.

It is recommended for the agency to take steps to fully separate the roles of the definition and monitoring of procedures on the one hand, and the implementation of those procedures on the other hand.

It is recommended for the agency to structurally embed the practice of the publication of thematic analyses in its work programme, providing overview reports which bring together the results of its quality assurance processes and its other activities in order to inform the higher education sector and broader society.

It is recommended that the agency better aligns the size of its team with the number of planned activities, in order to reduce the pressure on the staff to a level which is sustainable for the long term.

It is recommended that the agency invests enough staff time to allow for more strategic thinking, and preparation for the cultural shift which will be needed for a new approach to what is currently understood as internal and external quality assurance, if the tendency towards institutional accreditation is progressed.

It is recommended for the agency to take a more strategic approach towards the composition of the AQU team, which will improve the cooperation among departments, enhance staff development and training.

It is recommended that the agency reflects on how the concept of student-centred learning may become a core element in the agency's work and in its procedures (ESG 1.3).

It is recommended that the agency integrates student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4) more consistently into the different evaluation procedures.

It is recommended that the agency develops a clear vision on how the external quality assurance system in Catalonia should be designed in order to make it even more fit for purpose.

The agency is recommended, from a developmental approach, to invest in the strengthening of follow-up procedures, especially vis-à-vis the strategic purpose of strengthening institutional enhancement.

The agency is recommended to further strengthen the efforts to involve foreign experts, including students, in the quality assurance procedures in order to increase both the independence and the international input in the procedures.

It is recommended for the agency to guarantee that all reviewers and experts are trained regularly in order to keep them up-to-date on the procedures, the reasoning behind those procedures, and the values and concepts underpinning the 2015 ESG.

It is recommended that the agency publishes all reports, including the ex-ante accreditation reports on programmes that have not been successful.

It is recommended that the agency offers all available information in a more integrated way, making both quantitative and qualitative data easily accessible and comparable for all stakeholders, including students and employers.

It is recommended the agency to reconsider the composition of the Appeals Committee in order to fully exclude the risk of any perception of a lack of independence, notably by extending its composition by the inclusion of some non-Catalan members.