




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



GUIDE TO THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMME

PILOT PROJECT
AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA (UAB)



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INTRODUCTION

The process of globalisation taking place in present-day societies is being accompanied, amongst other realities, by a constant increase in the number of students taking studies in higher education at international level.

International student mobility, together with the revolution brought about by information and communication technologies (ICT), calls for the analysis of the current strategies by universities together with proposals for change, where this is necessary, in order to better place the universities in contexts that are increasingly complex and competitive.

The internationalisation of the universities is not in itself an end goal, but should be seen more as a tool or lever that can facilitate the development of quality of the highest standard in universities. It is important to stress that there is a need to link quality in higher education with the capacity to develop and offer services that best adapt to the requirements of users that are highly diverse and demanding.

In the Study Abroad programme at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), the users are primarily the student body and international academic institutions, employers, grant awarding bodies and student mobility advisory agencies.

The Study Abroad programme, and in particular the fifteen-week pre-established study programme, has been designed for people who wish to study Spanish in Barcelona along with a series of other subjects in different fields (economics, politics, architecture and the humanities) in English. On completion of the programme, students receive a certificate from the UAB with the number of credits equivalent to the courses taken, which can then be validated by their own university.

Students can choose to take between two and five subjects per semester, each consisting of 45 hours of lectures.

Classes in the Study Abroad pre-established programme are held in two places, on the Sant Pau campus, located in the university's historic Casa Convalescència building, which forms part of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, and the Eixample campus.

AQU Catalunya, the Catalan university quality assurance agency, has been requested to coordinate an external review of the Study Abroad Programme for the purposes of external recognition and quality assurance. As an independent body whose primary role is quality assurance and the promotion of higher education in Catalonia, the position of AQU Catalunya is to ensure compliance with international standards of quality assurance in higher education.

While serving as an endorsement for the UAB at international level, the review by the Agency, which takes the form of a pilot project, will also serve to detect aspects that can improve and enhance the design of the programme.

This guide is to be used in the drawing up of the external review report.

There are three stages to the complete review process (a self-evaluation and two external reviews):

- 1) The first stage is the self-evaluation, a characteristic of which is the promoting of discussions with the student body and university staff involved in the programme on the quality of the Study Abroad programme. This stage is led by the programme coordinators and ends with the drawing up of a **self-evaluation report that is to be made available to the external review panel.**
- 2) The objective of the second stage is a comprehensive analysis of the quality of the teaching and learning strategies and content of the courses in the Study Abroad programme. This stage functions as an external audit and is led by a panel of academics from other higher education institutions in Catalonia, i.e. external to the UAB. The outcome of this stage is a **report on the quality of the pre-established studies offered in the Study Abroad programme, which is to be made available to the external review panel.**
- 3) Lastly, an international review of the Study Abroad programme is carried out, which, on the basis of the outcomes of stages 1) and 2) and a site visit to the UAB, results in a report to AQU Catalunya on the quality and potential of the Study Abroad programme.

The report from stage 3 will be used by AQU Catalunya as fundamental evidence in determining whether the Study Abroad programme is to be recognised or not in terms of quality. In the case that recognition is affirmative it has a five-year validity. In the case where there are constraints on recognition, this will be granted provided that a) these aspects do not substantially affect the quality of the programme and b) a progress report is submitted after twelve months, showing that the constraints have been overcome.

EXTERNAL REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The external review of the UAB's Study Abroad programme will be an evidence-based process geared towards drawing conclusions on the quality of the programme. The objective is to prove that the programme deserves the trust of international users and appropriately fulfils their expectations. An affirmative answer to the following three questions is therefore necessary:

- Is the UAB adequately organised to manage and run the Study Abroad programme?
- Is the Study Abroad programme a product of interest for students who enrol in the programme?
- Does the academic level of courses in the Study Abroad programme conform to the accepted standards for university level courses?

In order to check the content of the self-evaluation report, the following hearings will be held by the external review panel as being representative of the academic community:

- Self-evaluation committee
- Representative/s of the UAB's governing board
- The team managing the Study Abroad programme
- Representatives of the teaching staff
- Student representatives
- International student services unit
- The Study Abroad programme administration

The external review panel may call for complementary hearings, where appropriate. It will also visit the facilities available to students on the Study Abroad programme.

The working language of the external review panel will be English. The panel will include members with an understanding of Catalan and Spanish; when appropriate, occasional use may be made of these two languages.

The work of the external review panel needs to bear in mind that the review methodology looks at the quality of the programme in terms of five dimensions:

- a) the objectives and context that the programme aspires to,
- b) the quality of the programme's resources,
- c) delivery of the programme,
- d) the sustainability and progress of the programme, and
- e) the results achieved.



Following on from its analysis and the information obtained during the site visit, the external review panel will need to ascertain the opinion of the internal self-evaluation committee regarding each dimension. It is important for the panel to take into consideration the quality and consistency of the evidence submitted and the data provided in the self-evaluation report.

Together with the tables of data provided in the corresponding annex of this guide, which will be filled out in the self-evaluation report, the external review panel will also need to bear in mind the satisfaction results of both students and teachers involved in the programme.

REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL

The results of the external review panel's work are to be included in a report that contains the following:

- General information on the process (including the composition/members of the external review panel, dates of the visit, work carried out by the external review panel, compliance with the agenda for the site visit and any incidents in the process).
- A general comment on the quality of the programme (max. 5,000 characters), which includes a recommendation to AQU Catalunya on whether the programme should be given external recognition or not. This general comment should be based on the five dimensions that have been analysed and answer the three key questions concerning the quality of the programme: organisational soundness of the programme, student interest in the programme that is being offered, and the academic level of the programme in accordance with university standards.
- A list of positively identified elements, bearing in mind the five dimensions evaluated (objectives, resources, delivery, sustainability and results of the programme).
- A list of recommendations to be implemented in the short term.
- A list of recommendations to be developed in the long term.
- Comments on the review process, including (max. 5,000 characters):
 - An opinion on the quality of the self-evaluation report and the assessments made by the self-evaluation committee.
 - Opinion on the proposed review methodology.

Annex 1. Protocol for the self-evaluation of the Study Abroad programme

The self-evaluation methodology looks at the quality of the programme in terms of five dimensions:

- a) the objectives and context that the programme aspires to,
- b) the quality of the programme's resources,
- c) delivery of the programme,
- d) the sustainability and progress of the programme, and
- e) the results achieved.

The self-evaluation committee carries out an analysis and assessment for each dimension, bearing in mind the discussions from the focus group meetings, as well as the quantitative and qualitative data on the running of the programme.

There is a series of key issues that the external review panel needs to assess using the following scale:

- A. The programme complies with the key issue (good practice)-
- B. The programme partially complies with the key issue, and as such is sufficient.
- C. The programme partially complies with the key issue, but is insufficient.
- D. The programme does not comply with the key issue.

This assessment is to be based on the availability of evidence and the assessment benchmarks given for each dimension.

1. Objectives of the Study Abroad programme

Key issue	Assessment
1 Are the overall objectives of the programme defined?	
2 Does the programme's management team have external benchmarks that it uses to compare the approach of the UAB's programme with similar programmes in other institutions of recognised standing?	
3 Does the programme and its overall objectives fulfil the expectations of students (prospective and enrolled) and other possible stakeholder groups?	
4 Are staff involved in the programme consulted about the overall objectives of the programme?	

Evidence required from the self-evaluation committee:

- A description of the overall objectives of the programme.
- Benchmarks from institutions with programmes similar to that of the UAB (please name them).
- Opinions and satisfaction surveys that substantiate the link between the overall objectives of the programme and the expectations of students. Take into account the conclusions of the focus groups (summary of the outcomes).
- Opinions of the teaching staff on the overall objectives of the programme. Take into account the conclusions of the focus groups (summary of the outcomes).

Assessment benchmarks:

- a) The university clearly describes the overall objectives set for the Study Abroad programme, and the academic staff and administrative and services staff associated with the programme are familiar with them.
- b) The objectives of the Study Abroad programme are clearly set out (benchmarking allows for comparison, from the UAB's point of view, of this type of programme with those being delivered at the other universities referred to).
- c) The objectives of the Study Abroad programme include standards of quality that are clear and public and fulfil the expectations of both current students and those prospectively interested in the programme, as well as other stakeholders.
- d) Academic staff and administrative and services staff are periodically consulted about the appropriateness of the overall set objectives and their achievement.

2. Programme resources

Key issue	Assessment
5 Does the programme have sufficient resources to effectively communicate with the different stakeholders, especially the students?	
6 Is the student selection process for the programme appropriate?	
7 Are the systems for selecting teachers appropriate to the objectives of the programme?	
8 Does the programme have appropriate teacher support and coordination systems?	
9 Is the programme's teaching infrastructure appropriate to the programme's objectives and the courses being offered?	
10 Are the extra-curricular activities appropriate to the programme's objectives and the students' expectations?	
11 Are facilities provided for the social and intercultural development of the students?	

Evidence required from the self-evaluation committee:

- A description of the elements for effective communication with the students prior to and after enrolment (name them).
- A description of the student selection process (give a brief description).
- A description of the teacher selection process (give a brief description).
- Profile of the teaching staff (CVs).
- Systems to coordinate teaching (examples of protocols and announcements).
- Information on available infrastructure: number and size of classrooms, areas for self-access learning and for students to socialise, areas available to teachers, access to the university's infrastructure (give a brief description).
- Existing extracurricular activities (list of proposed activities for the programme itself and access to other activities in the university).
- Information for the students on classroom and other study facilities (library, computer facilities, etc.) available for their use while on the programme (document).

Assessment benchmarks:

- a) The Study Abroad programme has adequate resources to develop effective communication. This policy ensures that students and their families, foreign academic institutions and other stakeholders have sufficient information on the courses being offered in the programme and their quality (including references on eligibility requirements and the academic demands of enrolled students). It also has satisfactory procedures and means whereby the users receive the information.
- b) There are processes to ensure that students accepted on the Study Abroad programme have sufficient knowledge and the competences (skills) to take and complete courses that they enrol in.
- c) The programme has appropriate procedures for the selection of teachers and administrative and services staff, in compliance with the quality objectives set for the Study Abroad programme.
- d) The programme encourages the setting up and development of effective mechanisms for the coordination and support of teaching by staff on the programme.
- e) Courses offered in the Study Abroad programme have the support of infrastructure that is suitable for modern teaching and learning processes.
- f) The available extracurricular activities and support services enable students to satisfactorily benefit from learning acquired from regular courses in the Study Abroad programme.

3. Programme delivery

Key issue	Assessment
12 Does the course content cater for the interest and fulfil the expectations of students?	
13 Are there appropriate strategies for student induction (that assist in academic integration) into the programme?	
14 Are the teaching and learning (pedagogical) strategies up-to-date, in line with international practice, and appropriate to the objectives of the programme?	
15 Are there teaching practices intended to help international students understand the programme content?	
16 Does the programme have mechanisms that encourage the social and intercultural interaction of students?	
17 Does the programme have support services that are appropriate to the personal needs of enrolled students?	

Evidence required from the self-evaluation committee:

- Instructions to the teaching staff on good student induction practices (document available).
- Programme-level induction measures (document available).
- Templates for describing courses (format).
- Description of the learning outcomes at the module level, especially for core competences (document available).
- Publicly available class timetables (document available).
- Access to online teaching material (give a brief description of the system).
- Examples of mechanisms that encourage social interaction between the students on the programme and local students (give a brief description).
- Information on the support services available to students on the programme (give a brief description).

Assessment benchmarks:

- a) At the start of the course, the programme has student induction processes based on good practices that assist students in academic integration, such as an appropriate introduction to the course by teaching staff; the setting up of groups of students to carry out joint academic activities; an introduction into the use of self-access learning services and the possibility of academic interaction with local students.
- b) Courses are organised according to specifications that, in addition to identifying the teacher in charge, include the contents, learning outcomes, the acquisition of knowledge, core competences and intercultural skills, the possible relationship with other courses in the programme, forms of assessment, etc.
- c) Teaching methods include learning processes that distinguish essential aspects from complementary ones, self-access learning systems, student participation in classes and group work.
- d) Courses are taught according to the established timetable.
- e) During the time they are enrolled, students have the opportunity to interact using the country's languages and forms of cultural expression, and procedures are in place to encourage contact with local students in non-academic contexts.
- f) The programme has appropriate services available to enrolled students, including services for new student orientation, accommodation, registration and enrolment, and legal advice for visas.

4. Programme sustainability and delivery

Key issue	Assessment
18 Is there any body/committee that endorses the teaching/learning content? Is its composition appropriate?	
19 Is there an appropriate information system to collect data on how the programme is running?	
20 Are there procedures to ensure that the content of courses being offered in the programme is kept up to date?	
21 Does the programme regularly collect data on user satisfaction, in particular from the students and teachers?	
22 Does the programme have an appropriate system to deal with users' grievances, complaints and requests, especially from the students?	
23 Are procedures set in place to analyse data on the running of the programme?	
24 Does the programme have flexible mechanisms for dealing with suggestions and implementing enhancements?	

Evidence required from the self-evaluation committee:

- Existence of data on the running of the programme.
- Procedures to monitor student satisfaction (survey format).
- Procedures to monitor the satisfaction of staff involved in the programme (survey format).
- The system for dealing with complaints, grievances and requests (give a brief description).
- The procedure for dealing with suggestions and implementing possible enhancements (give a brief description).
- Procedures for internal programme review (form and frequency).
- Opinions and satisfaction surveys of students and teachers. Take into account the outcomes of the focus groups.

Assessment benchmarks:

- a) There are information systems available to staff involved in the programme. Data is regularly gathered on the running of the programme (academic outcomes, student satisfaction, profile of enrolled students, etc.) and the satisfaction of teachers and administrative and services staff in relation to the teaching and management of the programme. Information on the overall outcomes of the Study Abroad programme is available to staff involved in the programme.
- b) There are procedures whereby teachers and administrative and services staff can analyse the results provided by the information system on the running of the programme.
- c) There are student consultation mechanisms (satisfaction and complaints/grievances).
- d) It is demonstrated that improvements are periodically implemented on the basis of recommendations and suggestions.
- e) Mechanisms exist to revise and update the courses (provision) being offered. The Study Abroad programme, through the coordination of teaching activities and internal monitoring of the programme's quality (student and teacher satisfaction), promotes the updating of academic provision. In addition, the teachers are appropriately informed of ways to update the courses that are being offered to enable the UAB's Study Abroad programme to be established as a top international study programme.

5. Programme outcomes

Table 1: Students enrolled	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013 <i>(anticipated)</i>	2013/2014 <i>(anticipated)</i>
In the pre-established programme					
In the regular studies programme					
In the tailor-made programme					
Total no. students					

Table 2a: Place of origin of the students (pre-established programme)	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013 <i>(anticipated)</i>	2013/2014 <i>(anticipated)</i>
Europe					
USA and Canada					
Latin America					
Asia and Oceania					
Africa					
% students entering the programme through a student mobility agency					

Table 2b: Place of origin of the students (regular studies)	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013 <i>(anticipated)</i>	2013/2014 <i>(anticipated)</i>
Europe					
USA and Canada					
Latin America					
Asia and Oceania					
Africa					
% students entering the programme through a student mobility agency					

Table 2c: Place of origin of the students (tailor-made)	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013 <i>(anticipated)</i>	2013/2014 <i>(anticipated)</i>
Europe					
USA and Canada					
Latin America					
Asia and Oceania					
Africa					
% students entering the programme through a student mobility agency					

Table 3: Students enrolled in courses according to field of study	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013 <i>(anticipated)</i>	2013/2014 <i>(anticipated)</i>
Social Sciences					
Languages					
Humanities					
Experimental Sciences					
Technology					
Health Sciences					

Table 4: Age and gender of enrolled students	18-22	22-25	26-30	>30
Female				
Male				

Table 5a: Academic quality of entry-level students* (entry grades to the pre-established programme). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with entry grades in interval A			
Students with entry grades in interval B			
Students with entry grades in interval C			

Table 5b: Academic quality of entry-level students* (entry grades to regular studies). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with entry grades in interval A			
Students with entry grades in interval B			
Students with entry grades in interval C			

Table 5c: Academic quality of entry-level students* (entry grades to tailor-made courses). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with entry grades in interval A			
Students with entry grades in interval B			
Students with entry grades in interval C			

Table 6a: Academic outcomes of the pre-established programme (final grades). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with final grades in interval A			
Students with final grades in interval B			
Students with final grades in interval C			

Table 6b: Academic outcomes of regular studies (final grades). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with final grades in interval A			
Students with final grades in interval B			
Students with final grades in interval C			

Table 6c: Academic outcomes of tailor-made courses (final grades). Define the interval.	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students with final grades in interval A			
Students with final grades in interval B			
Students with final grades in interval C			

Table 7: Early leavers/drop-outs	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students on the pre-established programme			
Students on the regular studies programme			
Students on the tailor-made programme			

Table 8a: Teachers on the pre-established programme according to their academic studies (discipline)	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Social Sciences			
Languages			
Humanities			
Technology			
Health Sciences			
Experimental Sciences			

Table 8b: Teachers on the tailor-made programme according to their academic studies (discipline).	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Social Sciences			
Languages			
Humanities			
Technology			
Health Sciences			
Experimental Sciences			

Table 9a: Teachers on the pre-established programme according to their highest academic qualification	2009/2010	Females	Males	Teachers with a degree/qualification from a foreign university
Short cycle degree (<i>diplomatura</i>)				
Bachelor				
Master's				
Doctorate				
Non-recognised higher studies				

Table 9b: Teachers on the tailor-made programme according to their highest academic qualification	2009/2010	Females	Males	Teachers with a degree/qualification from a foreign university
Short cycle degree (<i>diplomatura</i>)				
Bachelor				
Master's				
Doctorate				
Non-recognised higher studies				

Table 10: Number of grievances/complaints submitted in writing	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Students on the pre-established programme			
Students on the regular studies programme			
Students on the tailor-made programme			

Annex 2. Document for use by reviewers in the quality assurance of the teaching and learning strategies and content of courses in the Study Abroad programme

The purpose of the second stage of review is to obtain an objective view from the outside of the quality of the UAB's Study Abroad programme, in particular the pre-established studies, which are divided into three groups referred to as "tracks": Language, Business, Economics and Politics; Language, Art and Architecture; and Language and Mediterranean Studies. Each track consists of two courses in Spanish and various courses associated with different subject areas.

In order to carry out the quality assurance of courses offered directly by the Study Abroad programme, AQU Catalunya will appoint a group of experts who, using a sample of the programme teaching activities, are to assess the content and teaching and learning strategies in relation to the expectations of international university students on enrolling in courses in the UAB's Study Abroad programme.

The activity comprising the quality assurance of teaching of the UAB's Study Abroad programme will be based on the following protocol, which includes eight (8) dimensions.

Assessment on a course-by-course basis is not necessary, and an overall assessment of each track is recommended using a scale from 1 to 4. Where appropriate, any detected good practices or shortcomings, either on an individual or group basis, can be noted in the section set aside for comments, such as: "a third of the subjects are...", "more than half of the subjects...", "in one or two cases..." or "there are many/very few subjects that...".

The proposed assessment rating, which is based on a scale from 1 to 4 (low to high, see below), is flexible. If no assessment rating is given, it will be interpreted as there having been insufficient information for a rating to be made.

Rating of 4: The highest assessment rating score, given where the situation is a sound one; exemplary; of high quality; of a top level.

Rating of 3: Given where the situation is good although not outstanding.

Rating of 2: The standard of the teaching and learning activities is minimal and there are shortcomings that need to be rectified.

Rating of 1: The situation is clearly insufficient and needs to be corrected immediately.

Evaluation protocol

Reviewer's name:

Date of the evaluation:

List of subjects evaluated:

1	<p>Gaining access to the information on courses from the UAB's Study Abroad programme website</p>						
	<p>Benchmark:</p> <p>The programme webpage is clearly set out into sections, one of which deals specifically with course content. It is easy to search through the section and find updated information on the content of courses in which students can then enrol.</p>						
Reviewer's comments:				1	2	3	4

Presentation of the subjects

Benchmark:

A brief description is given of each subject with the necessary general information for students on the course content and intended learning outcomes.

2

Reviewer's comments:

1	2	3	4
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Information on course duration

Benchmark:

Information is given on the total number of class-based (direct teaching) hours, their distribution according to sessions throughout the course, and any course-equivalency credit.

3

Reviewer's comments:

1	2	3	4
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Recommendations to students prior to starting the course

Benchmark:

The information on the courses includes recommendations and prior knowledge requirements for students.

4

Reviewer's comments:

1

2

3

4

Subject content

Benchmark:

Subject content is up-to-date and appropriate to university level.

5

Reviewer's comments:

1

2

3

4

Teaching and learning methodologies

Benchmark:

The teaching and learning methodologies are clearly described for each subject. Class activities are appropriate to the desired learning outcomes for the subject and the intended level of university study.

6

Reviewer's comments:

1	2	3	4
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Evaluation methodology

Benchmark:

A clear description is given of the form and criteria for assessment and evaluation, and the approach used is appropriate to the context of the subject and international standards.

7

Reviewer's comments:

1	2	3	4
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References/bibliography

Benchmark:

Information is given on the core set of bibliographic references for each subject and they are appropriate to the course content and the intended level of university study.

8

Reviewer's comments:

1

2

3

4