

Planning of activities 2007

European Quality Assurance Area

The activities of AQU Catalunya for 2007 within the framework of the European Quality Assurance Area are structured along two main lines: support for the Catalan universities in the development and implementation of the European standards and guidelines for quality, and adaptation of the Agency's internal procedure to the European standards.

Development of the European standards and guidelines for quality in Catalan universities

AQU Catalunya seeks to give impetus and support to Catalan universities in the development and application of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA that refer to internal quality assurance in higher education institutions. It thus proposes the setting up of a working group with representatives of the technical quality units in Catalan universities to implement a process that gives a leading role to these units in evaluation and improvement processes, as well as the adaptation of their activities to international standards and guidelines. Within this framework, the proposal has been made for the technical quality units to be admitted into a pilot accreditation project by AQU Catalunya in 2008, in accordance with the European standards and guidelines for quality.

Adaptation of the Agency's internal procedure to the European standards

In accordance with the Bergen communiqué, AQU Catalunya is giving impetus to its participation in introducing the model developed by the ENQA based on the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA*, proposed for the national-level review of quality agencies in respect of the guidelines and commonly accepted criteria. This will lead to the inclusion of quality agencies in a European register of quality assurance bodies that will serve to identify the professional and credible agencies operating in Europe.

The process of evaluating the agencies according to the European model consists of an internal stage, which the agency itself carries out, and an external stage, in which an independent committee outside of the agency carries out the evaluation. The external evaluation finishes with a report, the content and conclusions of which must closely comply with European standards, and which gives an account of the possibilities and recommendations for improvement. Once the external evaluation has been completed, AQU Catalunya will plan correctives actions for any shortcomings and actions for improvement to be introduced and carried out as soon as possible.

Positive evaluation is necessary in order for AQU Catalunya to continue as a member of the ENQA and for it to be entered in the forthcoming European Register of External Evaluation Agencies.

Evaluation of institutional quality

The activities of AQU Catalunya for 2007 within the context of the evaluation of institutional quality will focus mainly on the adaptation of degree programmes to the new legal framework, the designing of undergraduate programmes, the evaluation of affiliated institutions/centres, and the carrying out of impact studies and projects in relation to quality and the university system.

Adaptation of degree programmes to the new legal framework

The first quarter of the year will see the completion of the evaluation of recognised postgraduate programmes in Catalan universities (the second time this has been done) for their introduction in the 2007-2008 academic year, with the definitive results of this call. Following this, the Agency will carry out a critical review of the evaluation process to detect any weak points and introduce improvements. On the basis of accumulated experience, AQU Catalunya will then prepare the third call for applications for the evaluation of recognised postgraduate programmes.

Design of undergraduate programmes

In coordination with the Directorate General for Universities, AQU Catalunya will support the universities in the design of new undergraduate programmes, especially in the description of the student profiles and learning objectives. This project is to be developed by a series of working groups that will deal with undergraduate degrees in related disciplines, taking as benchmarks, amongst others, the results of the graduate employment surveys carried out by AQU Catalunya in collaboration with the universities' social councils, and the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science's *Guidelines for preparing university undergraduate and Masters degrees*. In this context, discussions are to begin with the universities to deal with the changes that will occur.

Evaluation of affiliated institutions and centres

AQU Catalunya is to develop the methodology for evaluating affiliated institutions and centres, which will focus on the analysis of an institution's capability to offer degree programmes of quality, adaptation to the new legal framework, and coordination between the university and affiliated institutions. When this methodology is ready, AQU Catalunya will offer interested institutions, centres and universities the possibility of initiating the evaluation process.

Carrying out of studies and projects

AQU Catalunya will prepare the ninth annual report, with the results of the evaluation, certification and accreditation processes that have been carried out. Other projects in this area

are the promotion of student participation in the evaluation of programmes and institutions, analysis of the quality of the indicators for teaching, research and services, and the survey on Ph.D. graduate placement/employment in the labour market.

Teaching staff and research

Within the framework of teaching staff and research, the Agency's activities for 2007 will focus on the evaluation of university teaching staff prior to recruitment at university for the posts of tenure-track staff, non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff, tenured staff and senior teaching staff; convergence of the evaluation process of the private universities with that of public universities; and revision of the evaluation manuals for the quality of teaching work by faculty staff.

Evaluation of university teaching staff

The corresponding calls are made for the issuance of pre-selection reports for the recruitment of tenure-track staff and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff (according to the period of validity of this post), and for the issuance of research and advanced research accreditation.

Integration of the evaluation processes of teaching staff at private universities with similar processes at public universities

In order to harmonise and rationalise the evaluation process, processes involving the teaching and research staff at private universities are to be merged with the evaluation of teaching staff at public universities. Appropriate measures will be taken on a temporary basis to prevent the slowing down of evaluation processes involving teaching staff at private universities.

Revision of the evaluation manuals for the quality of teaching work by faculty staff

The evaluation manuals for the quality of teaching work by faculty staff are to be revised by AQU Catalunya, in collaboration with the universities. Account will be taken of the ANECA-instigated DOCENTIA programme in the revision in order for an agreement between the two agencies on the mutual recognition of evaluations to be established.

Cooperation and exchange

Within the framework of cooperation and exchange, the Agency's activities for 2007 will focus on developing meetings to coordinate with the vice-rectors and technical units in charge of university quality to promote adaptation to the new legal framework, as well as the taking over and running of the Technical Secretariat of the REACU

University coordination

Cooperation and joint analysis are to be developed with the vice-rectors and technical units in charge of university quality in Catalan universities, the goal being to promote the adaptation of the universities and degree qualifications to the new legal framework, and to fulfil the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education system.

Autonomous (regional) agencies and the national agency

At the beginning of 2007, AQU Catalunya was put in charge of running the Technical Secretariat of the REACU, the Spanish network which promotes collaboration and contributes to establishing the necessary conditions for the mutual recognition of evaluation processes among all of the quality agencies in Spain. In the running of the Technical Secretariat, AQU Catalonia will need to prepare a work-schedule proposal, coordinate and be instrumental in the work to be carried out by the network members, call the General Assembly meetings and coordinate aspects associated with diffusion and communication both within the network and externally