



# GUIDE TO THE ACCREDITATION OF RECOGNISED PHD PROGRAMMES

This document sets out the standards and criteria for the accreditation of PhD programmes. It is intended to serve as a guide for the internal self-assessment processes of non-institutionally accredited university centres, and for the committee tasked with evaluating compliance with the standards and criteria.





# GUIDE TO THE ACCREDITATION OF RECOGNISED PHD PROGRAMMES

The guide has been prepared in accordance with the precepts of Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD study programmes, as amended by Royal Decree 576/2023, of 4 July, and Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance.

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## INTRODUCTION

The regulatory framework foresees the accreditation of study programmes taught in non-institutionally accredited university centres as an administrative procedure or action that responds to a legal mandate and officially recognises the academic credentials (qualifications) awarded by the universities to their students. Thus, from a regulatory point of view, the goal of accreditation is **to ensure that study programmes offered by universities meet the formal and administrative requirements enforced by the authority while guaranteeing that the educational level attained by their graduates corresponds to that certified by the institution.** To this end, the following aspects are reviewed:

- > That the qualification complies with the legal requirements established by the competent authority.
- > That in relation to the established skills profile the academic proposal meets the specifications of the Spanish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MECES) and the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES) according to the qualification level, and the extent to which the academic knowledge underpinning it is relevant and up-to-date.
- > That it has been developed using suitable resources in terms of teaching staff, learning support services, infrastructures and material resources.
- > That certificates awarded adhere to suitable, appropriate procedures to assess student achievement, clearly showcasing the level of quality demanded.
- > That the academic pathways of progression and graduation, as well as employability, of graduated students fall in line with the characteristics of the students and the potential afforded by the labour context.
- > That it benefits from internal assurance mechanisms guaranteeing regular analysis of the study process centred on the continual improvement of the education of the students.

The programme accreditation model proposed in this guide is in line with AQU Catalunya's framework for the verification, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised study programmes, which promotes the ongoing assessment of courses and a culture of quality and accountability. Therefore, in addition to its primary objective of guaranteeing equivalence between the training received and the European qualification level, it also aims:

- > To ensure the quality of the study programmes offered in accordance with the qualification levels established and the criteria set out in current regulations.
- > To assure availability of valid and reliable information to support the decision-making process of people using the university system.
- > To facilitate internal quality improvement processes in relation to the services and programmes developed by Catalan universities.

In order to achieve these objectives, the following presuppositions are assumed:

- > **International equivalence.** As an acknowledged agency and a member of European quality assurance bodies (ENQA, EQAR), AQU Catalunya must adopt assessment guidelines and criteria in accordance with this status (in line with the ESGs, 2015).
- > **Involvement of each institution in the assessment of evidence and the determination of improvement actions** Internal validation or self-assessment is a key aspect of the procedure. The enhancement plan that structures and sets the time frame for the measures to be implemented must be based on verifiable qualitative and quantitative information generated within the framework of the internal quality assurance system.
- > **Integration of accountability and continual improvement** as a means of incorporating internal and external requirements.
- > Specific attention to **students' academic achievements**, vital evidence as to the quality of the study programme.
- > **Recognition of progress, best practices and outstanding quality** as an indication of the need to accept the principle that accreditation should foster continual improvement of study programmes.
- > **Transparency and disclosure of processes and results, an essential goal to assuring credibility in decisions.** This also implies that HEIs are guaranteed the right to defence in relation to final decisions in a process of statements.

## Framework of reference and regulations

Below are the main sources used in the preparation of this guide:

- > **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).**<sup>1</sup> This is a benchmark document for quality assurance institutions and agencies involved in the design, implementation, and assessment of internal and external higher education quality assurance systems.
- > **Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised study programmes (MVSMA).**<sup>2</sup> The VSMA Framework sets out AQU Catalunya's position on the different processes for assessing recognised study programmes and establishes a common framework connecting the processes of validation, monitoring, modification, and accreditation.
- > **Guide to the institutional accreditation of university centres.**<sup>3</sup> This document sets out the

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<sup>1</sup> [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) (Brussels: ENQA, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> AQU Catalunya. [Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees \(MVSMA\)](#) (Barcelona, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> AQU Catalunya. [Guide to the institutional accreditation of university centres](#) (Barcelona, 2021).



standards and criteria for the accreditation of university centres.

From a regulatory standpoint, the guide meets the requirements of Royal Decree **99/2011, of 28 January**,<sup>4</sup> **regulating recognised PhD study programmes, as amended by Royal Decree 576/2023, of 4 July**,<sup>5</sup> and **Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September**,<sup>6</sup> establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance, which redefines the organisation and structures of recognised university study programmes. In this context, the law states that "non-institutionally-accredited university centres must renew the accreditation of recognised university qualifications, as per the procedure set by each autonomous community for the universities within its sphere of competence".

**Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres**,<sup>7</sup> must also be taken into account, as it refers to the institutional accreditation of university centres.

Finally, curricula should be guided by democratic principles and values and aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**,<sup>8</sup> to contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda. In this context:

- > HEIs must guarantee, among other aspects, respect for human rights and fundamental rights, democratic values, freedom of thought and academic freedom, tolerance, recognition of and respect for diversity, equality for all citizens, inclusion, the elimination of all discriminatory practices and content, and a culture of peace and participation.
- > They must also ensure the introduction of a cross-cutting gender perspective in university teaching and, specifically, in studies of the contribution of women throughout history in all areas of knowledge and in academic and research activity, in accordance with Article 28 of Law 17/2015, of 21 July, on the effective equality of women and men.
- > Furthermore, they must adopt measures to promote universally accessible curricular proposals designed for all people to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities in

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Universities. [Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD study programmes](#) (BOE no. 35, of 11/02/2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Universities. [Royal Decree 576/2023, of 4 July, amending Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD study programmes; Royal Decree 1002/2010, of 5 August, on the issuing of recognised university degrees; and Royal Decree 641/2021, of 27 July, regulating the direct granting of subsidies to Spanish public universities for the modernisation and digitalisation of the Spanish university system within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan](#) (BOE no. 170, of 18/07/2023).

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Universities. [Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance](#) (BOE no. 233, of 20/09/2021).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Universities. [Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres](#) (BOE no. 179, of 28/07/2021).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations. [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2015).

accordance with the content of the second final provision of the consolidated text of the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion, approved by Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of 29 November.

- > Lastly, curricula should provide for the consideration of climate change in accordance with the provisions of Article 35.2 of Law 7/2021 of 20 May on climate change and energy transition.

## Structure of the guide

The main body of the guide is structured in six sections, which correspond to the six different dimensions of accreditation assessment:

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

For each dimension, it identifies the standards and substandards that the qualification must demonstrate it meets in order to obtain a favourable accreditation report, explains what will be assessed to ascertain the achievement of the quality standards, and proposes, as a guideline, a series of evidence and indicators that can be provided to demonstrate this achievement.

Not all of the proposed evidence carries the same weight when it comes to ascertaining or deciding whether the standard is met. Also, depending on the nature, history, and processes in place, the evidence may differ from that which is suggested here. However, the evidence submitted by the institution should make it possible to determine the extent to which the standards have been met.

As far as possible, the evidence should provide information for the entire period between accreditations. Study programmes should not produce evidence and indicators exclusively for the purpose of the accreditation process; on the contrary, they should make the documentation and indicators they use and generate in their day-to-day activities available to AQU Catalunya. With this in mind, links to public sites or access to the applications in which this information is stored can be provided as evidence.

Where appropriate, the indicators that can be used to demonstrate the achievement of the standards are provided for each sub-dimension. For the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC), most of these indicators are already available through the EUC Dades portal. **All indicators relating to people should be disaggregated by sex, and any analysis derived from them should incorporate the gender perspective.**

Thus, this guide contains, for each dimension of assessment:

- > The quality standards and substandards that apply to the dimension.
- > The evidence and indicators that will be taken into account when assessing the level of achievement of the area. Some of the evidence and indicators proposed concern aspects relating to the institution as a whole; nevertheless, these centre-based elements cannot be dissociated from the programme's quality.
- > Assessment rubrics. A rubric system is a matrix relating the criteria to be assessed to their level of achievement. This level is described by a quality descriptor or standard. This guide uses a holistic rubric system: the criteria or dimensions that demonstrate the achievement of each standard are assessed jointly. The rows indicate the levels of achievement, and the columns show the criteria or dimensions assessed by AQU Catalunya to demonstrate the achievement of each standard. The cells contain the description of the achievement for each level and set of criteria.

In addition, an annex provides definitions of the indicators for the accreditation of PhD programmes.

Table 1. Relationship between the areas in the guide and the corresponding ESG standards (2015)

ACCREDITATION AREAS	ESG 2015
1. Quality of the training programme	1.2. Design and approval of programmes
	<b>1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment</b>
	<b>1.4. Admission, progression, recognition and certification of students</b>
	<b>1.1. Policy for quality assurance</b>
2. Relevance of public information	<b>1.8. Public information</b>
3. Efficacy of the internal quality assurance system	1.1. Policy for quality assurance
	<b>1.7. Management of the information</b>
	<b>1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes</b>
4. Suitability of teaching staff to the training programme	<b>1.5. Teaching staff</b>
5. Effectiveness of learning support systems	1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment
	1.4. Admission, progression, recognition and certification of students
	<b>1.6. Learning resources and support for students</b>
6. Quality of the training programmes outcomes	<b>1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment</b>
	<b>1.7. Management of the information</b>

# 1. STUDY PROGRAMME QUALITY

**The study programme design (research lines, skills profile and training activities) is current according to the requirements of the educational field and it meets the required level of study according to the MECES and the MCQES.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- The programme has mechanisms in place to ensure that the admission profile of those enrolled is suitable and that the number of students is consistent with the characteristics and distribution of the programme's research lines and the number of places available.
- The programme has suitable mechanisms in place for supervision of PhD students and, where applicable, of training activities.

In order for society to place its trust in the academic quality of study programmes, it is necessary to set up a benchmark qualifications framework that is known and endorsed by senior officials from the European Higher Education Area, which also allows for mutual recognition between the member states. It is within this context that the Spanish Higher Education Qualifications Framework<sup>9</sup> (MECES) and the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework<sup>10</sup> (MCQES) have been developed in alignment with the Dublin descriptors.

This framework is valid for higher education institutions and entities responsible for the external quality assurance of degree programmes. It should also promote a shared understanding of the expectations associated with qualifications that allows for the consistent use of degrees awarded and facilitates the international mobility of graduates.

Institutions should have processes within their internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) that allow for the design and approval of study programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The academic qualification awarded at the end of a programme should be clearly specified and communicated. In addition, the qualification should be correlated to the relevant level of the national higher education qualifications framework and, by extension, to the European Higher Education Area qualifications framework. Programmes must also be delivered in a way that encourages students to play an active role in creating the learning process, and their assessment must reflect this approach. Lastly, it is paramount for procedures to be in place for admission, recognition and completion in line with the envisaged goals, and for entrance policies and admission criteria and procedures to be

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Universities. [Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15 July, establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education](#) (BOE no. 185, of 03/08/2011).

<sup>10</sup> AQU Catalunya. [Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework \[EN\]](#) (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2023).

applied in a consistent, transparent manner.

In the case of Catalan institutions, this standard is already deemed as met if the validation procedure on recognised PhD study programmes gave a positive outcome. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to reflect on the admission profile of enrolled students and on PhD student supervision within the PhD programmes. In this section, the programme should analyse the admission profile, the distribution of students according to research lines and the remaining indicators and statistical data concerning supervision and training activities, taking into consideration the gender perspective. It should also implement actions for improvement when a lack of equality is identified between male and female PhD students.

## Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > Updated programme validation report consolidated in the Register of Universities, Higher Education Centres and Degree Programmes (RUCT, from the Catalan).
- > A report on validation and, where applicable, modifications of the study programme (issued by AQU Catalunya).

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Available places.
- > Places requested.
- > New incoming students enrolled.
- > Total number of students enrolled.
- > Percentage of foreign students enrolled.
- > Percentage of students who previously undertook Master's programmes at other universities.
- > Percentage of part-time students enrolled.
- > Percentage of students with grants for the completion of their PhD thesis.
- > Percentage of students according to entrance requirements.
- > Percentage of students according to research line.

The indicators must be offered for each academic year to assess their development throughout the entire period encompassed by the accreditation. Moreover, indicators relating to students should envisage all circumstances: full-time and part-time, and students changing their study mode (beginning on full-time and ending on part-time and vice versa).

## Rubrics

<p>1.1. The programme has mechanisms in place to ensure that the admission profile of those enrolled is suitable and that the number of students is consistent with the characteristics and distribution of the programme's research lines and the number of places available</p>	
<p><b>Progressing towards excellence</b></p>	<p>The programme has highly suitable mechanisms in place to ensure the suitability of both the number of people enrolled and their profiles.</p> <p>All those enrolled have profiles appropriate to the field and characteristics of the programme.</p> <p>The number of people enrolled is highly suitable, given the number of places offered, the lines of research, and the characteristics of the programme.</p>
<p><b>Compliant</b></p>	<p>The programme has mechanisms in place to ensure the suitability of both the number of people enrolled and their profiles.</p> <p>Most of the people enrolled have profiles appropriate to the field and characteristics of the programme.</p> <p>The number of people enrolled is consistent with the number of places offered, the lines of research, and the characteristics of the programme.</p>
<p><b>Compliant with conditions</b></p>	<p>The programme has mechanisms in place to partially ensure the suitability of both the number of people enrolled and their profiles.</p> <p>Some of the people enrolled have profiles appropriate to the field and characteristics of the programme.</p> <p>The number of people enrolled differs from the number of places offered or is partly consistent with the programme's characteristics and lines of research.</p>
<p><b>Non-compliant</b></p>	<p>The programme does not have mechanisms in place to ensure the suitability of both the number of people enrolled and their profiles.</p> <p>Most of the people enrolled do not have profiles appropriate to the field and characteristics of the programme.</p> <p>The number of people enrolled deviates significantly from the number of places offered and is inconsistent with the programme's characteristics and lines of research.</p>
<p>1.2. The programme has suitable mechanisms in place for supervision of PhD students and, where applicable, of training activities</p>	
<p><b>Progressing towards excellence</b></p>	<p>The programme has highly suitable mechanisms in place for supervising PhD students and, where appropriate, their training activities.</p>
<p><b>Compliant</b></p>	<p>The programme has suitable mechanisms in place for supervising PhD students and, where appropriate, their training activities.</p>

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<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	There are some shortcomings in the programme's mechanisms for supervising PhD students and, where appropriate, their training activities.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The programme does not have adequate mechanisms in place for supervising PhD students and, where appropriate, their training activities.



## 2. RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

**The institution appropriately informs all stakeholders of the PhD programme's characteristics.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- The institution provides accurate, exhaustive, up-to-date and accessible information on the details of the PhD programme and its operational delivery.
- The institution provides information on academic results, student and faculty satisfaction, and the outcomes of internal and external assessment processes.

HEIs should provide information that includes the supply of programmes and the selection criteria; the expected learning outcomes; the qualifications to which they lead; the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used; the academic outcomes obtained; the opportunities for learning available to students; and the information on the employability of degree holders.

The public information should also include a description of the participating teaching staff with their contact details and an overview of their *curriculum vitae*.

In addition, HEIs must ensure that students have access to information on mobility, learning resources and other support services, as well as complaint and suggestion mechanisms.

Finally, all teaching regulations, the IQAS and other regulations or policies on gender equality, gender-based violence, non-discrimination, promotion of diversity, disability, etc., should also be included in the public information.

Information on the study programme's outcomes should include the academic results of the last five academic years and the satisfaction levels of graduates and teaching staff. The results of the various assessments, both internal and external, to which the study programme is subjected must also be made public.

### Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > Enhancement plan(s).
- > Monitoring reports on the centre and the study programmes.
- > Website and other public information.
- > IQAS processes and procedures (public information).

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Student satisfaction levels (with the public information).
- > Faculty satisfaction levels (with the public information).
- > Graduate satisfaction levels (with the public information).

## Rubrics

<b>2.1. The institution publishes accurate, exhaustive, up-to-date and accessible information on the details of the study programme and its operational delivery</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	Up-to-date, exhaustive and pertinent information is offered on the characteristics of the PhD programme and its operational delivery.
	The information is very clear, legible, aggregated and accessible to all stakeholders.
<b>Compliant</b>	Pertinent information is offered on the characteristics of the PhD programme and its operational delivery.
	The information is clear, legible, aggregated and accessible to all stakeholders.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	Partial information is offered on the characteristics of the PhD programme and its operational delivery.
	The published information shows certain shortcomings with respect to clarity, legibility, aggregation and accessibility.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	Inadequate information on the PhD programme's characteristics and its operational delivery.
	The published information shows serious shortcomings with respect to clarity, legibility, aggregation and accessibility.
<b>2.2. The institution publishes information on academic outcomes and programme satisfaction levels</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The institution publishes up-to-date, aggregated, accessible and exhaustive information on the academic outcomes and programme satisfaction levels.
<b>Compliant</b>	The institution publishes information on the academic outcomes and programme satisfaction levels.

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<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The institution publishes partial information on the academic outcomes and programme satisfaction levels.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The institution does not publish the academic outcomes and programme satisfaction levels.

### 3. EFFICACY OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

**The HEI has a functioning internal quality assurance system that has a formal status and assures the quality and continuous enhancement of the PhD programme in an efficient way.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- The IQAS implemented facilitates the processes for the design and approval of the PhD programme, its monitoring and its accreditation.
- The IQAS implemented ensures information and relevant outcomes are compiled for effective management of the PhD programmes.
- The IQAS implemented is reviewed periodically in order to analyse its suitability and, where applicable, an enhancement plan is put forward in order to optimise it.

The activity of the training programme should be linked to the institution's quality assurance strategy and policies. The implemented IQAS must have processes in place to ensure the design, approval, monitoring and accreditation of study programmes. The institution must be able to demonstrate the degree to which these processes are in place. Thus, it must be able to demonstrate that the training programme has been approved internally following the processes implemented by its IQAS.

Similarly, once the training programme is implemented, it must be monitored and periodically reviewed to ensure that the planned objectives are achieved and that it meets the needs of students and society. These reviews must be carried out in accordance with the processes defined by the IQAS and incorporate a programme improvement plan. Finally, the processes must be able to respond appropriately to the needs for accreditation of the study programme.

All internal stakeholders must assume responsibility for quality and commit to quality assurance at all levels and to developing a quality culture. In order to achieve this goal, they must develop and implement a strategy for the on-going enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have formal status and be publicly available.

The implemented IQAS must ensure the compilation of relevant information and outcomes, particularly the academic results and satisfaction levels of the programme's stakeholders, in order to manage the PhD programmes effectively. In this context, effective processes be put in place to collect and analyse information on the adequacy of the training programme's development.

Data and indicators should be collected on students' performance, the student population profile, students' progress, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with their course and the learning and support resources available to them, graduates' satisfaction levels with their studies

and career paths, and teachers' satisfaction levels. The information can be collected using different methods, and the accessibility, cost, and significance of the results should be considered. This information should give rise to a relevant and appropriate improvement plan that prioritises the actions to be taken according to their importance.

An institution's IQAS should be based on a model of continual enhancement. In addition, as the key instrument of quality assurance and the primary method used to ensure the continual improvement of the institution's study programmes, its effectiveness should be regularly assessed.

The effectiveness of the IQAS can be demonstrated by the degree to which its processes are implemented and the analysis of the evidence arising from its application, such as the programme monitoring reports, the IQAS review reports, time series of data on academic outcomes and levels of satisfaction, and the documentation required for the accreditation process, among other things.

## Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > Degree programme enhancement plan(s).
- > Minutes of meetings of the governing bodies and other committees.
- > Monitoring reports on the centre and the study programmes.
- > IQAS processes and procedures.
- > IQAS review reports.
- > Document management tools.
- > Scorecard or similar.

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Percentage of enhancement actions not implemented.
- > Percentage of targets associated with scorecard indicators achieved.

## Rubrics

<b>3.1. The IQAS implemented facilitates the processes for the design and approval of the PhD programme, its monitoring and its accreditation</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that facilitates optimum programme design and approval, as well as programme monitoring and accreditation, with the involvement of all the stakeholders.
<b>Compliant</b>	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that facilitates programme design and approval, as well as programme monitoring and accreditation, with the involvement of the most important stakeholders.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The IQAS comprises an implemented process that partially facilitates programme design and approval, as well as programme monitoring and accreditation.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The IQAS does not comprise any process (or it has not been implemented) for programme design and/or approval, monitoring and accreditation.
<b>3.2. The IQAS implemented ensures information and relevant outcomes are compiled for effective management of the PhD programmes</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	<p>The IQAS has an implemented process that optimally manages the collection of relevant outcomes, with the existence of a table of indicators providing complete information on its evolution in time.</p> <p>The IQAS allows for the compilation of information on stakeholder satisfaction (in particular, that of graduates, PhD students, teaching staff and employers) with the programme of studies.</p>
<b>Compliant</b>	<p>The IQAS has an implemented process that manages the collection of relevant outcomes, with the existence of a table of indicators providing information on its evolution in time.</p> <p>The IQAS provides for the compilation of information on the satisfaction of PhD students and graduates with the programme of studies.</p>
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	<p>The IQAS has an implemented process that partially manages the collection of relevant outcomes, with the existence of a table of indicators providing partial information on its evolution in time.</p> <p>The IQAS compiles information on PhD students satisfaction only with regard to certain aspects of the programme of study.</p>
<b>Non-compliant</b>	<p>The IQAS does not have a process (or it is not implemented) for the management of the collection of the outcomes of the programme. The data which it possesses are partial and do not include any time series.</p> <p>The IQAS does not compile any information on stakeholder satisfaction with the programme.</p>

<p>3.3. The IQAS implemented is reviewed periodically in order to analyse its suitability and, where applicable, an enhancement plan is put forward in order to optimise it</p>	
<p><b>Progressing towards excellence</b></p>	<p>The IQAS has an implemented process that obliges the HEI to periodically and completely review the suitability of the IQAS itself. The revision is materialised in a report that presents a reflection on the operation of the IQAS and that allows the tracking of the changes carried out.</p> <p>The enhancement actions of the IQAS are consistent with the revision carried out and are structured in enhancement plans that include all the necessary elements for the optimum periodic monitoring of their implementation.</p>
<p><b>Compliant</b></p>	<p>The IQAS has an implemented process for its revision which is materialised in a report that presents a reflection on the operation of the IQAS and that includes the changes carried out on the system.</p> <p>The enhancement actions of the IQAS are consistent with the revision carried out and are structured in enhancement plans that include the minimum necessary elements to carry out a sufficient monitoring of the implementation of the measures.</p>
<p><b>Compliant with conditions</b></p>	<p>The IQAS has a process for its revision but it is not implemented. Some non-systematic revision and enhancement actions are carried out on the processes of the IQAS.</p> <p>The enhancement actions of the IQAS have a partial scope and prioritisation, and their monitoring is not systematic.</p>
<p><b>Non-compliant</b></p>	<p>The IQAS does not have a process for its revision.</p> <p>Revision and improvement actions are not carried out on the IQAS.</p>

## 4. SUITABILITY OF TEACHING STAFF

**Teaching staff are both sufficient and suitable in accordance with the characteristics of the PhD programme, the scientific field and the number of students.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- Teaching staff have accredited research activity.
- Teaching staff are sufficient in number and work a suitable number of hours in order to perform their functions.
- The PhD programmes supported by suitable actions in order to promote thesis supervision and the tutoring of researchers in training.
- The level of involvement of foreign teaching staff and international doctors in monitoring committees and thesis assessment boards is suitable for the scientific field of the programme.

Teaching staff will need suitable experience and training in line with the aims of the PhD programme, and there must be a sufficient number of teachers with a suitable number of teaching hours in order to cover the main academic tasks: thesis supervision and tutorials, delivery and assessment of training activities, and, if applicable, programme management, etc.

**Teaching staff** on the PhD programme shall be composed of teaching and research staff from the unit responsible for the PhD programme who are involved in the delivery of tuition on the programme (tutoring, thesis supervision, delivery of training activities, membership on the academic committee, monitoring committees, etc.). Under exceptional circumstances other doctors may form part of the programme's teaching staff in accordance with the bylaws of the PhD school and the university itself.

The **tutor** is the individual responsible for ensuring that research and training activities are in accordance with the principles of the programmes and, as the case may be, those of PhD schools. Tutors must be members of the PhD programme's teaching staff. If the thesis supervisor is a member of the programme's teaching staff, they usually also act as a tutor.

The **thesis supervisor** is the person with ultimate responsibility for the research tasks carried out by the trainee researcher under their supervision. The thesis supervisor is also responsible for the coherence and appropriateness of the training activities and the impact and novelty of the subject matter covered by the doctoral thesis in their field. Similarly, they are responsible for ensuring that the trainee researcher is suited to the projects and activities they sign up for. In addition, academic guidance tasks shall be organised jointly by the tutor of the PhD student. It is not mandatory for the thesis supervisor to be a member of the teaching staff of the PhD programme.

It is necessary to reflect on whether the PhD programme maintains the initial validation conditions, particularly in relation to the following areas:



- > The accredited research experience of teaching and research staff who have supervised PhD theses.
- > The quality of the teaching staff's scientific contributions.
- > The number of active competitive research projects.
- > The internationalisation of teaching staff.

As established by Law 17/2015, universities must carry out actions to balance the presence of both sexes in all disciplines, especially in those in which one of the two sexes is significantly under-represented, with the aim of guaranteeing the effective equality of women and men in teaching and research careers. Please remember that all indicators relating to people should be disaggregated by sex, and any analysis derived from them should incorporate the gender perspective.

Teachers should have access to and participate in general and discipline-specific training activities that enable them to keep up to date with scientific developments and the teaching, learning and assessment of the discipline.

The institution must support the teaching staff in performing their duties and improving the quality of their teaching and research work. In this respect, there must be an ongoing plan for teacher training.

In order to improve the quality of teaching, teaching staff must have access to students' opinions on its quality and be given opportunities to improve it.

## Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > Competitive research projects in progress in which the lead researcher is a member of the programme's teaching staff.
- > Teaching staff taking part in current competitive research projects.
- > Scientific contributions of teaching staff which are relevant in the study programme field.
- > Foreign lecturers<sup>11</sup> among teaching staff supervising PhD theses and among staff delivering training activities.
- > Results of actions addressed to teaching staff to encourage PhD thesis supervision.
- > If necessary, a training plan or IQAS documents relating to the quality assurance of teaching staff, human resources policies, etc., may be taken into consideration.

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<sup>11</sup> Foreign lecturers are considered to be those who are not linked to a Catalan university or a university in another part of Spain.

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Number of defended thesis supervisors.
- > Percentage of teaching staff on the programme with sexennials in progress who have supervised PhD theses.
- > Percentage of defended thesis supervisors with sexennials in progress.

## Rubrics

<b>4.1. Teaching staff have accredited research activity</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	At least 75% of teaching staff involved with the PhD programme who have supervised PhD theses have accredited research activity.
<b>Compliant</b>	Around 60% of teaching staff involved with the PhD programme who have supervised PhD theses have accredited research activity.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	Less than 50% of teaching staff involved with the PhD programme who have supervised PhD theses have accredited research activity.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	Less than 25% of teaching staff involved with the PhD programme who have supervised PhD theses have accredited research activity.
<b>4.2. Teaching staff are sufficient in number and work a suitable number of hours in order to perform their functions</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	Both the structure and the number of teaching staff are more than adequate for supervising PhD theses, assist PhD students and, if applicable, deliver the training activities on the programme.
<b>Compliant</b>	Both the structure and the number of teaching staff are adequate for supervising PhD theses, assist students and, if applicable, deliver the training activities on the programme.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The structure and the number of teaching staff are inadequate for supervising PhD theses, assist students and, if applicable, deliver the training activities on the programme.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	Both the structure and the number of teaching staff are severely inadequate for supervising doctoral theses, assist students and, if applicable, deliver the training activities on the programme.
<b>4.3. The PhD programme is supported by suitable actions in order to promote thesis supervision and researchers in training tutoring</b>	

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<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The PhD programme has clear, highly suitable mechanisms in place for the recognition and promotion of tutoring and thesis supervision tasks.
<b>Compliant</b>	The PhD programme has mechanisms in place for the recognition and promotion of tutoring and thesis supervision tasks.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The mechanisms for the recognition and promotion of tutoring and thesis supervision tasks put in place by the PhD programme bear shortcomings.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The PhD programme does not have mechanisms in place for the recognition and promotion of tutoring and thesis supervision tasks.
<b>4.4. The level of involvement of foreign teaching staff and international doctors in monitoring committees and thesis assessment boards is suitable for the scientific field of the programme</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The programme benefits from broad, suitable presence of international persons with expertise in thesis assessment boards and in monitoring and preliminary reports committees.
<b>Compliant</b>	The programme benefits from the presence of international persons with expertise in thesis assessment boards and in monitoring and preliminary reports committees.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The programme benefits from scant presence of international persons with expertise in thesis assessment boards and in monitoring and preliminary reports committees.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The programme does not benefit from the presence of international persons with expertise in thesis assessment boards and in monitoring and preliminary reports committees.

## 5. DIMENSION INDICATORS EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

**The physical resources and services needed to deliver the activities envisaged in the PhD programme and for the training PhD students are sufficient and suitable in accordance with the number of PhD students and the characteristics of the programme.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- The available physical resources are adequate for the number of PhD students and the characteristics of the PhD programme.
- The available teaching and learning support infrastructures provide an adequate response to the learning needs of students.
- Services available to PhD students provide suitable support to the learning process and encourage access to the labour market.

In addition to the teaching staff, HEIs make a series of services and resources available to students to motivate, facilitate and enhance learning, regardless of location (on campus, distance learning, etc.). This section refers to all of the services and resources that support student learning. The scope of this section includes:

- > **Teaching support staff.**
- > **Services**, primarily reception and other logistics services (accommodation, advice on legal issues relating to residence, etc.), academic guidance services (scholarships, mobility, projects, etc.) and professional guidance and labour market access services.
- > **Physical resources**, such as facilities (space for PhD students and their work, laboratories, computer rooms, library services, etc.), technological infrastructure, technical and scientific material and equipment, etc.

The technical, managerial, administrative and services staff must be sufficient in number, qualified to carry out their tasks and have access to training opportunities. The institution must foresee the need for human resources to support a wide range of services and infrastructures: teaching infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, clinical facilities, animal facilities, etc.), libraries, study spaces, IT infrastructures, documentation, tutoring services, guidance for students with disabilities, financial support assessment, career counselling and placement, residential life, sports, etc. The proper functioning of these resources depends on the support staff who manage them. The support staff involved in training activities must be qualified and sufficient in number to be able to meet the needs of all students.

The study programme must have professional insertion schemes –or use those provided by its centre or institution–. These services must be consistent with the discipline, teaching methodology

and learning needs of the training programme, and the availability and access (physical and online) to documentary resources and information for learning and research, particularly the teaching materials recommended for the subjects covered by the training programme, must be guaranteed.

In regard to employment placement, services should be offered to support students' professional career through, for example, individual or group counselling, dissemination of job offers, etc.

The facilities and other educational infrastructures available to the programme –whether belonging to the centre or collaborating entities– must be sufficient in relation to the number of students and appropriate for carrying out the training activities specific to the programme. The material resources and facilities for learning must include teaching spaces (classrooms and group workspaces), laboratories, IT suites, libraries and reading rooms, as well as the scientific, technical, humanistic or artistic equipment necessary to follow the study programme.

The study programme should inform students as to whether or not specific mobility schemes are envisaged. These schemes must be appropriate and coherent with the learning objectives and outcomes of the study programme and have adequate mechanisms for recognising credits.

The facilities and services must be adapted to the features, needs and diversity of the student body, especially those with disabilities, and equality of access must be ensured.

Lastly, students should be satisfied with the resources, facilities and learning support services provided by the study programme.

## Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > Related IQAS processes and procedures.
- > The educational facilities and infrastructures. Identification of the institution's most significant learning resources, particularly laboratories, digital infrastructure, documentation, etc.
- > Institutional plan of action for encouraging access to the labour market.
- > Action plan(s) tutorial (PAT).
- > Career guidance plan or activities.

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Satisfaction levels of students in regard to material resources and services.
- > Satisfaction levels of thesis supervisors and tutors in regard to material resources and services.

- > Satisfaction levels of graduates in regard to material resources and services.

## Rubrics

<b>5.1. The technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are competent and able to dedicate sufficient time to assisting students and ensuring the smooth operation of resources and infrastructures</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are highly qualified and suitably experienced to be able to carry out their duties.
	Both the structure and number of technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are highly appropriate for attending to the student body and guaranteeing the functioning of resources and infrastructures.
	The technical, managerial, administrative and services staff benefit from significant institutional support that allows them to carry out their duties and progress professionally.
<b>Compliant</b>	The technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are adequately qualified and have the necessary experience to be able to carry out their duties.
	Both the structure and number of technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are appropriate for attending to the student body and guaranteeing the functioning of resources and infrastructures.
	The technical, managerial, administrative and services staff benefit from institutional support that allows them to carry out their duties and progress professionally.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	Some of the technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are adequately qualified and have the necessary experience to be able to carry out their duties.
	Neither the structure nor the number of technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are appropriate for attending to the student body and guaranteeing the functioning of resources and infrastructures.
	The technical, managerial, administrative and services staff benefit from occasional institutional support to help them carry out their duties and progress professionally.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	A minority of the technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are adequately qualified and have the necessary experience to be able to carry out their duties.
	The structure and number of technical, managerial, administrative, and services staff are severely inappropriate for attending to the student body and guaranteeing the functioning of resources and infrastructures.
	The technical, managerial, administrative and services staff do not benefit from institutional support to help them carry out their duties and progress professionally.
<b>5.2. Services available to PhD students provide suitable support to the learning process and encourage access to the labour market</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	Services available to PhD students provide highly suitable support to the learning process and encourage access to the labour market.
	Students are highly satisfied with the services and physical resources at their disposal.

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<b>Compliant</b>	Services available to PhD students provide suitable support to the learning process and encourage access to the labour market.
	PhD students are satisfied with the services and physical resources at their disposal.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	Services available to PhD students bear shortcomings in providing support to the learning process and encouraging access to the labour market.
	Students are partly satisfied with the services and physical resources at their disposal.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	Services available to PhD students fail to provide suitable support to the learning process and fail to encourage access to the labour market.
	PhD students are not satisfied with the services and physical resources at their disposal.
<b>5.3. The available physical resources are adequate for the number of PhD students and the characteristics of the PhD programme</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The available physical resources and other services are highly suitable in order to ensure that research which should be conducted by PhD students is carried out.
<b>Compliant</b>	The available physical resources and other services are suitable in order to ensure that research which should be conducted by PhD students is carried out.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The available physical resources and other services bear shortcomings when it comes to ensuring that research which should be conducted by PhD students is carried out.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The available physical resources and other services fail to ensure that research which should be conducted by PhD students is smoothly carried out.

## 6. QUALITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

**The learning outcomes achieved, supported by the doctoral theses and the scientific results derived from them, are consistent with the intended training profile. The quantitative results of the indicators in terms of academic performance, satisfaction and access to the labour market are adequate.**

The following substandards apply to this area:

- The learning outcomes achieved correspond to the training objectives set and to the level established for PhD programmes in the MECES and the MCQES.
- The number of PhD theses defended, their duration and the scientific results derived from them are adequate and consistent with the intended training profile.
- PhD students, graduates and faculty are satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.
- The values for the graduate labour market access indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the PhD programme.

The learning outcomes achieved by the students enrolled in the training programme must align with the intended outcomes, the training objectives of the PhD programme and the corresponding level established in the MECES and the MCQES. They must be specific, observable, relevant, and achievable by all students.

The results of the learning outcomes acquired by students must be used to review and improve the programme.

The assessment of the learning demonstrated in the PhD thesis is the process that makes it possible to determine the degree to which the learning outcomes have been achieved. PhD theses, and indeed training activities and the assessment system, need to be relevant, public and adequate to certify the intended learning outcomes set out in the education profile. The fitness of purpose of the system for assessment infers a judgement regarding its relevance (validity) and an assessment of the level of discrimination of these activities and their assurance of quality (reliability). In addition, HEIs will need to ensure processes and instruments are put in place in order to compile information on student progression, to monitor such progression and to act accordingly.

The achievement and certification of the objectives reflected in the programme's learning profile depend, to a large extent, on the training activities, teaching methodologies and assessment systems proposed. These elements should be carefully designed to promote student-centred teaching and learning.

The strategy used to study and teach the programme must be framed within the centre's overall strategy and be shared and known by the teaching staff and the students. The training activities and



teaching methodology must demonstrate the study programme's commitment to teaching innovation and be appropriate for its educational level and discipline.

The teaching and learning process should respect and cater for the diversity of learners and their needs in a way that allows for flexible learning paths.

The teaching methodologies and activities must consider and respect the diversity of the student body (origin, race, gender, sexual identity, religion, opinion or any other personal, social or cultural consideration).

Both the training activities and the assessment system need to be relevant, public and adequate to certify the intended learning outcomes set out in the education profile. The system for assessment should provide timely and effective feedback to students. The fitness of purpose of the system for assessment infers a judgement regarding its relevance (validity) and an assessment of the level of discrimination of these activities and their assurance of quality. The appraisal of the system of assessment 's effectiveness in certifying the achievement of the learning outcomes should include the opinion of the student body.

The learning assessment is the process by which the degree of achievement of the learning outcomes is determined; the assessment methods (the tasks undertaken by the student) must be relevant and coherent with the teaching methodology and activity. Similarly, the assessment methods and criteria should be coherent with the learning outcomes to be assessed and capable of confirming that all the specified learning outcomes have been achieved and that the marks awarded reflect the different levels of student achievement.

The study programme must have mechanisms in place to ensure that students receive punctual feedback in relation to the assessment of their assignments and analysis of the level achieved, as well as comments to help them improve and guide them in their academic progression.

Lastly, the assessment methods should be tailored to the type of student, particularly those with disabilities or other special educational needs.

The labour market outcomes of PhD degree holders will also be assessed in this section, as this is one of the key results of university education. This section makes use of the wealth of information on this aspect of the Catalan university system, which provides for a contextualised analysis of the main indicators.

At the time of accreditation, HEIs must have formally established and implemented instruments for collecting information on stakeholder satisfaction. The cross-cutting nature of these results is such that they are not analysed in a unique, comprehensive fashion in this section, although this information will be key for the focus group meetings. The satisfaction levels of enrolled and graduated students and teaching staff must be sufficient and in line with the satisfaction results obtained by other study programmes in the same field of study.

## Evidence

The *evidence* that may demonstrate the achievement of the standard is as follows:

- > PhD theses produced on the context of the PhD programme and the scientific results derived from them.
- > Information on training activities and assessment systems.

## Indicators

The *indicators* that can support this evidence include the following:

- > Number of defended theses on the context of full-time study.
- > Number of defended theses on the context of part-time study.
- > Average duration of the PhD programme when studied full-time.
- > Average duration of the PhD programme when studied part-time.
- > Study programmes drop-out percentage.
- > Percentage of doctors with an international mention.
- > Number of scientific outcomes from PhD theses.
- > Percentage of students on the PhD programme that has undertaken research stays (of three months or longer).
- > Student satisfaction (with the teaching/roll-out of the PhD programme).
- > Graduate satisfaction (with the overall educational experience of the PhD programme).
- > Employment rate.
- > Rate of suitability of work in relation to the study programme.

All indicators must be offered for each academic year to assess their development throughout the entire period encompassed by the accreditation.

## Rubrics

<p><b>6.1. The learning outcomes achieved correspond to the training objectives set and to the level established for PhD programmes in the MECES and the MCQES.</b></p>	
<p><b>Progressing towards excellence</b></p>	<p>The documented evidence on the achievements of PhD students, particularly on the PhD thesis and other research outcomes, reveals a high level of training and shows that the requirements of the necessary level of qualifications, as described in the MECES and the MCQES, are met to a highly satisfactory standard.</p> <p>The PhD theses are based on a planned topic in accordance with the research or knowledge transfer lines or groups to which the teaching staff belong.</p> <p>The methodology used and the training activities developed are satisfactorily in line with the learning outcomes. The doctorand activity document assessment criteria, research plans and doctoral theses are highly appropriate to certify that all doctoral students have achieved the learning outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Compliant</b></p>	<p>The documented evidence on the achievements of PhD students, particularly on the PhD thesis and other research outcomes, reveals an adequate level of training and shows that the requirements of the necessary level of qualifications, as described in the MECES and the MCQES, are met to a highly satisfactory standard.</p> <p>Most PhD theses are based on a planned topic in accordance with the research or knowledge transfer lines or groups to which the teaching staff belong.</p> <p>The methodology used and the training activities developed are in line with the learning outcomes. The doctorand activity document assessment criteria, research plans and doctoral theses are appropriate to certify that all doctoral students have achieved the learning outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Compliant with conditions</b></p>	<p>The documented evidence on the achievements of PhD students, particularly on the PhD thesis and other research outcomes, reveals an inconsistent level of training and shows that the requirements of the necessary level of qualifications, as described in the MECES and the MCQES, are not met to a highly satisfactory standard.</p> <p>The PhD theses are partly based on a planned topic in accordance with the research or knowledge transfer lines or groups to which the teaching staff belong.</p> <p>The methodology used and the training activities developed are partially in line with the learning outcomes. The doctorand activity document assessment criteria, research plans and doctoral theses do not enable adequate certification that all doctoral students have achieved the learning outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Non-compliant</b></p>	<p>The documented evidence on the achievements of PhD students, particularly on the PhD thesis and other research outcomes, reveals a poor level of training and shows that the requirements of the necessary level of qualifications, as described in the MECES and the MCQES, are not met to a highly satisfactory standard.</p> <p>The PhD theses are scarcely based on a planned topic in accordance with the research or knowledge transfer lines or groups to which the teaching staff belong.</p>

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	There is no clear relationship between the intended learning outcomes and the methodology used and the training activities developed. The doctorand activity document assessment criteria, research plans and doctoral theses are not appropriate to certify that all doctoral students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.
<b>6.2. The number of PhD theses defended, their duration and the scientific results derived from them are adequate and consistent with the intended training profile.</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	The documentary evidence shows that the time series for the academic indicators is consistent with the types of researchers in training and equivalent programmes, and clearly shows continuous enhancement of the PhD programme.
<b>Compliant</b>	The documentary evidence shows that the time series of most of the academic indicators is consistent with the types of researchers in training and equivalent programmes, and shows continuous enhancement of the PhD programme.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The documentary evidence shows that there is a certain mismatch in the time series for the academic indicators in relation to the types of researchers in training and equivalent programmes, and does not clearly show continuous enhancement of the PhD programme.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The documentary evidence shows that there is a significant and serious mismatch in the time series for the academic indicators in relation to the types of PhD student and equivalent programmes, and there is no sign of continuous enhancement of the PhD programme.
<b>6.3. PhD students, graduates and faculty are satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	PhD students, graduates and faculty are very satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.
<b>Compliant</b>	PhD students, graduates and faculty are satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	The degree of satisfaction of PhD students, graduates and faculty with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results shows some issues that require the definition of an improvement plan.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	PhD students, graduates and faculty are not satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.
<b>6.4. The values for the graduate labour market indicators are adequate for the characteristics of the PhD programme</b>	
<b>Progressing towards excellence</b>	<p>The usefulness of the training provided is greater than that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The employment rate of graduates is much higher than that of the active population for the same reference period and age group, and is higher than that of programmes in the same</p>

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	<p>subject area.</p> <p>The rate of suitability for work of graduates is much higher than that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p>
<b>Compliant</b>	<p>The usefulness of the training provided is adequate compared to that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The employment rate of graduates is higher than that of the active population for the same reference period and age group, and is similar to that of programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The rate of suitability for work of graduates is similar to that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p>
<b>Compliant with conditions</b>	<p>The usefulness of the training provided is low compared to that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The employment rate of graduates is close to that of the active population for the same reference period and age group, but is low compared to that of programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The rate of suitability for work of graduates is low compared to other programmes in the same subject area.</p>
<b>Non-compliant</b>	<p>The usefulness of the training provided falls a long way short of that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p> <p>The employment rate of graduates is very low compared to that of the active population for the same reference period and age bracket.</p> <p>The rate of suitability for work of graduates is much lower than that of other programmes in the same subject area.</p>
	<p>The PhD programme does not carry out studies on graduates' access to the labour market.</p>

## ANNEX I. DEFINITION OF INDICATORS FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PHD PROGRAMMES<sup>12</sup>

Whenever possible, the indicators and statistical data should be broken down according to gender.

### Quality of the training programme

**Demand:** number of applications submitted for admission to a PhD programme.

**New incoming students enrolled:** number of PhD programme students who have formalised their enrolment for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

**Total number of students enrolled:** total number of students who have formalised their enrolment on a programme in a specific academic year.

**Number of places available:** number of places available on a PhD programme.

**Percentage of students with a scholarship to conduct their PhD thesis:**<sup>14</sup> number of students who have formalised their enrolment on a programme and have been awarded a scholarship to undertake their PhD study programme as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the programme.

**Percentage of foreign students enrolled:** number of foreign students who have formalised their enrolment on a programme as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the programme.

**Percentage of part-time students enrolled:** number of students who have formalised their enrolment on a programme who have been permitted to conduct their thesis project on a part-time basis as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the programme.

**Percentage of students who previously undertook Master's programmes at other universities:** number of students who did not previously undertake Master's programmes at the same university as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the programme.

**Percentage of students according to research line:** number of students enrolled in each specific research line of the programme as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the

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<sup>12</sup> These indicators are calculated for each academic year although in order to analyse them they are grouped into the periods deemed suitable (three years for monitoring and six for accreditation).

<sup>13</sup> Students that have been accepted but are not enrolled due to taking bridging courses, for instance, are not included.

<sup>14</sup> Only the following grants for PhD studies are taken into account: University Teacher Training (FPU), Research Staff Training (FPI), grants for the recruitment of new research staff (FI), university-specific grants, Erasmus Mundus, industrial PhDs and Innovative Training Networks (ITN).

programme.

**Percentage of students according to admission requirements:** number of students enrolled who needed bridging courses as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled on the programme.

The following is a list of the evidence and indicators identified throughout this guide as the information institutions can make available to AQU Catalunya to demonstrate compliance with the standards that must be met for the programme to receive accreditation. The list is indicative and, depending on the institution's history, nature and operation, may not be exhaustive. Therefore, any additional evidence deemed by the programme to contain relevant information for monitoring and improvement may also be submitted. Some of the evidence proposed here may also be used to demonstrate the achievement of standards in other dimensions not listed in this guide.

### **Suitability of teaching staff**

**Number of defended thesis supervisors:** number of supervisors that have supervised theses that have been defended within the programme.

**Percentage of defended thesis supervisors with sexennials in progress:** number of sexennials secured by supervisors of theses that have been defended within the programme over the past six years as a percentage of the number of potential applicants (civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff, teaching staff of private universities).<sup>15</sup>

### **Effectiveness of learning support systems**

**Satisfaction of PhD students with the study programme:** number of students who place themselves in each level of satisfaction included in the survey on satisfaction as a percentage of the total number of students who responded to the survey.

**Satisfaction of thesis supervisors with the study programme:** number of thesis supervisors who place themselves in each level of satisfaction included in the survey on satisfaction as a percentage of the total number of thesis supervisors who responded to the survey.

### **Quality of (learning) outcomes**

**Average duration of the PhD programme when studied full-time:**<sup>16</sup> average number of courses

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<sup>15</sup> In the assessment of this indicator it is necessary to bear in mind programmes where the number of potential applicants is very low, for instance, the health field, fields with many Ramón y Cajal (RyC) or Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA) directors, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Excluding the periods defined in [Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD study programmes](#)

followed by full-time students who have defended their thesis since originally enrolling on the programme.

**Average duration of the PhD programme when studied part-time:**<sup>17</sup> average number of courses followed by part-time students who have defended their thesis since originally enrolling on the programme.

**Number of scientific outcomes of PhD theses:** number of scientific contributions stemming from the PhD theses defended within the programme, including papers in indexed journals, books, book chapters, artistic and cultural production, and patents.

**Number of defended theses on the context of full-time study:** total number of theses defended by students on the PhD programme studying full-time.

**Number of defended theses on the context of part-time study:** total number of theses defended by students on the PhD programme who have been permitted to study part-time.

**Study programme drop-out percentage:** number of students during an academic year that have neither formalised their enrolment on the programme they were following nor defended their thesis as a percentage of the total number of students that could have enrolled again in said academic year.

**Percentage of students on the PhD programme that have undertaken research stays:** number of students on the PhD programme that have undertaken research stays lasting more than 3 months at research centres or other universities as a percentage of the total number of students on the programme.

**Percentage of doctors with an international mention:** number of students during an academic year that have defended their thesis and who, according to the regulations, have obtained the international mention for their qualification as a percentage of the total number of students that defended their thesis during said academic year.

**Rate of suitability of work in relation to the study programme:** number of doctors from the programme's academic field who are performing PhD-level functions as a percentage of the total number in work.

**Employment rate:**<sup>18</sup> number of persons in work as a percentage of the total number of doctors qualifying in the programme field.

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(BOE no. 35, of 11/02/2011) (maternity, illness, etc.).

<sup>17</sup> See previous note.

<sup>18</sup> Although the aim is to obtain indicators for each programme, at present AQU Catalunya's survey on access to the labour market solely provides the rates in the educational field for each university. The programme-specific rates need to be used where available.





## ANNEX II. CHANGE LOG

The first (December 2011) through third (December 2019) editions of the *Guide to the Accreditation of Recognised PhD Programmes* included the assessment procedure.

This methodological review was prompted by the publication of Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance, and Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD study programmes, as amended by Royal Decree 576/2023, of 4 July. The main changes to the document are as follows:

- > The content relating to the assessment procedure has been removed and now constitutes a separate document.
- > The content has been restructured, taking the [Guide to the Accreditation of University Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes](#) as a reference (September 2022). The content of dimension 2 is the same, and the technical, managerial, administrative and services staff are covered in dimension 5.
- > The regulatory references have been revised and updated accordingly.
- > The wording of the rubrics has been revised and adjusted.
- > The annex containing the MCQES specifications for level 4 has been removed and reference is made to the corresponding updated document.

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

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