



THE SATISFACTION LEVELS OF **MASTER'S** DEGREE GRADUATES FROM CATALAN UNIVERSITIES 2017-2023



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Barcelona, 2026

First edition

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20746277

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Keywords: Satisfaction of master's degree students, postgraduate studies, university experience, teaching-learning, student support, skills.

Recommended citation: José Luis Mateos-González, Anna Prades Nebot. *The satisfaction levels of master's degree graduates from Catalan universities (2017-2023)*. AQU Catalunya, 2026. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20745986>

Translation: Palíndromo

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INTRODUCTION AND MAIN FINDINGS

Every year since 2017, the [satisfaction survey of recent graduates of official master's degree courses offered by universities in the Catalan Higher Education System \(SUC\)](#) has collected feedback from tens of thousands of students on various key aspects of their educational experience, such as the teaching and learning process, the support received during their studies, and the outcomes they achieved. The primary goal of this survey is twofold: first, to provide data that will guide the continuous improvement of existing degree programmes for current students; and second, to provide valuable information for prospective students when choosing a degree programme.

This document is the third public report compiled with the aggregate results of the last three years of the master's degree graduate satisfaction survey (2021-2023). With over 16,500 responses, a response rate of 26% was achieved with a sampling error of 0.5%, thus providing representative data. The robustness of the data also allowed for it to be disaggregated into disciplinary fields and degree groupings based on disciplinary similarity, in what we call *expanded sub-fields*.¹ This enables the identification of those master's degrees that stand out, both for their excellence and their room for improvement, in the satisfaction dimensions analysed.

Furthermore, the data for the three-year period is accompanied by evolutionary data for each annual edition of the survey, which allows us to assess how the satisfaction levels of students at Catalan universities have progressed during the seven years that this survey has been conducted. The study included in this document considers graduate satisfaction with the following aspects of the university experience:

¹ The expanded sub-fields group the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC) university degrees according to their disciplinary affinity. This classification, defined in the [AQU Catalunya degree catalogue](#), divides the degree programmes into seventeen groups, allowing for an improved analysis of the results and the detection of differences in graduate satisfaction between disciplines.

Figure 1. Dimensions and items included in the master's degree graduate satisfaction survey. Each box represents a specific survey dimension and contains the corresponding items to be evaluated by the students²



The analysis reveals an upward trend through to 2021, the year in which master's degree graduates rated their overall satisfaction as "very good". This was followed by a period of stabilisation in the following two years.

This report also presents the results of an in-depth analysis of the factors that influence the overall satisfaction of master's degree graduates. Specifically, we have identified that more than a third of this satisfaction can be primarily attributed to satisfaction with the **development of professional competences, the teaching methodology, and the teaching staff.**

A comparative analysis between the expanded sub-fields of the satisfaction data for master's degree graduates from the last three editions of the survey shows that the **results vary depending on the degree discipline:**

- > The master's degrees in **Economics, Business and Tourism** register very high levels of satisfaction, significantly surpassing other programmes offered by the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC) in almost all the dimensions analysed. Notably, the assessment of **personal skills and professional competences** scored **8 out of 10.**
- > **Arts and Design** and **Education** degrees show room for improvement in most items in the survey. However, the **external work placements** in Education (**7.8 out of 10**) and the **workload** in Arts and Design (**7.5 out of 10**) score highly.

² In this report, the survey items analysed are written in summary form for ease of reading. The full descriptor for each survey item can be found in the appendix.

The satisfaction levels of master's degree graduates from Catalan universities (2017-2023)

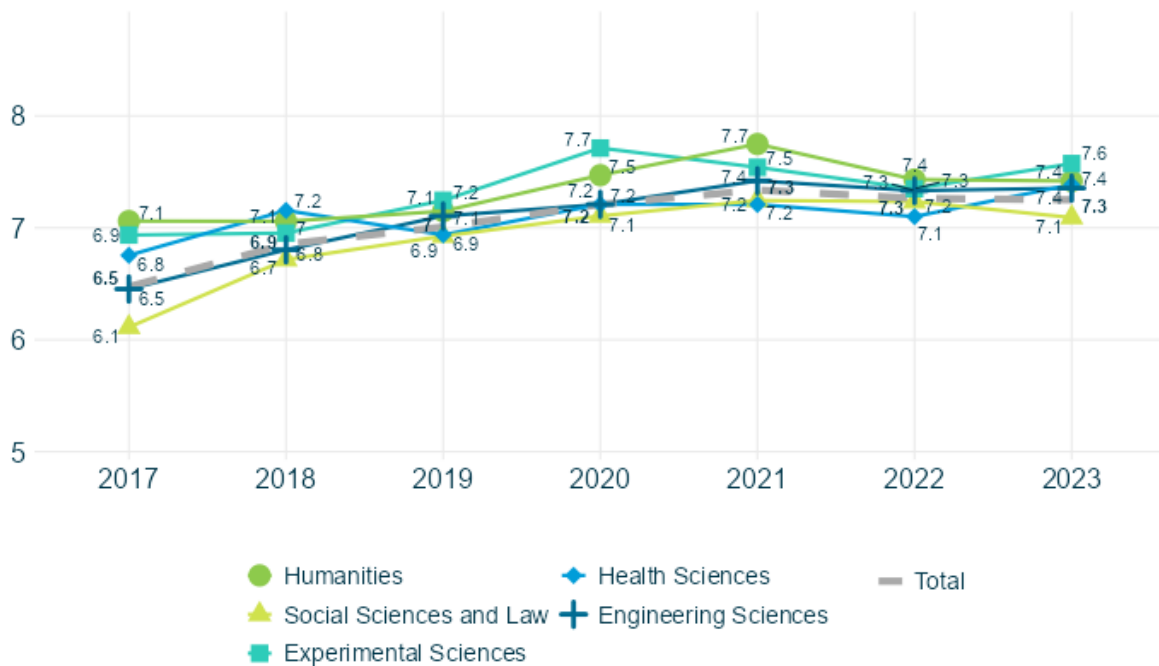
- > **Languages and Literature** degrees are notable for the high level of satisfaction with the **teaching and learning processes** expressed by their graduates.
- > The more **vocationally oriented** sub-fields, such as **Nursing and Health, Social Work, Education** and **Law**, tend to rate their satisfaction with their **master's dissertation (TFM)** more modestly compared to graduates of other disciplines offered by the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC).
- > Graduates in **ICT, Medicine, Biological Sciences** and **Education** report the **highest levels of satisfaction with external work placements**.

However, the satisfaction survey goes far beyond the scope of this report. To help those responsible for degree programmes analyse the data and consider how to improve it, the results of this survey can be viewed in more detail in the data section of the [Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya \(EUC\)](#) portal.

Lastly, please bear in mind that this study only presents the **statistically significant results**. Throughout the report, you will find technical footnotes that explain the analysis carried out, with further technical information provided in the appendix.

SEVEN YEARS OF SATISFACTION WITH MASTER'S DEGREES: GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT AND STABILISATION

Figure 2. Evolution of master's graduates' overall satisfaction with their degrees, by degree field (2017-2023)



→ Between 2017 and 2021, overall satisfaction with master's degrees has gradually increased, from 6.5 to 7.3 points out of 10.






→ From 2021 onwards, satisfaction stabilised at around 7.3. At the same time, the variability of responses has tended to decrease, suggesting a more standardised opinion among graduates.

→ In terms of the evolution of satisfaction by field of knowledge:

- **Science, Humanities and Engineering:** these three fields show a positive and sustained trend in satisfaction, with maximum scores registered around 2020–2021 (up to 7.7 points) and subsequent stabilisation at high values (between 7.4 and 7.6 in 2023).
- **Social Sciences:** despite experiencing a considerable improvement since 2017 (6.1), it remains the field with the lowest average satisfaction level in 2023 (7.1).
- **Health:** despite some slight fluctuations over the years, this field exhibits a general trend toward improvement, with average satisfaction scores rising from 6.8 in 2017 to 7.4 in 2023.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TEACHING STAFF AND TEACHING METHODOLOGY: KEY INGREDIENTS FOR STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH MASTER'S DEGREES

Figure 3. Key factors explaining the overall satisfaction of master's graduates with their degree (2021-2023)³

		Increase in overall satisfaction with master's degrees*	Importance of the factor (contribution to R ²)**
	Professional development	+0.2	12.4%
	Satisfaction with teaching staff	+0.18	11.6%
	Teaching methodology	+0.12	11.3%
	Personal development	+0.13	11%
	Appropriate and up-to-date content	+0.15	10.7%

* The figure represents the impact on **overall satisfaction** of each of these factors scoring **one point** higher. For example, if a graduate rates the teaching staff one point higher (e.g., an 8 instead of a 7), overall satisfaction with the master's degree **rises, on average, by 0.18 points**.

** The percentage represents the factor's contribution to explaining individual differences in satisfaction with the master's degree.

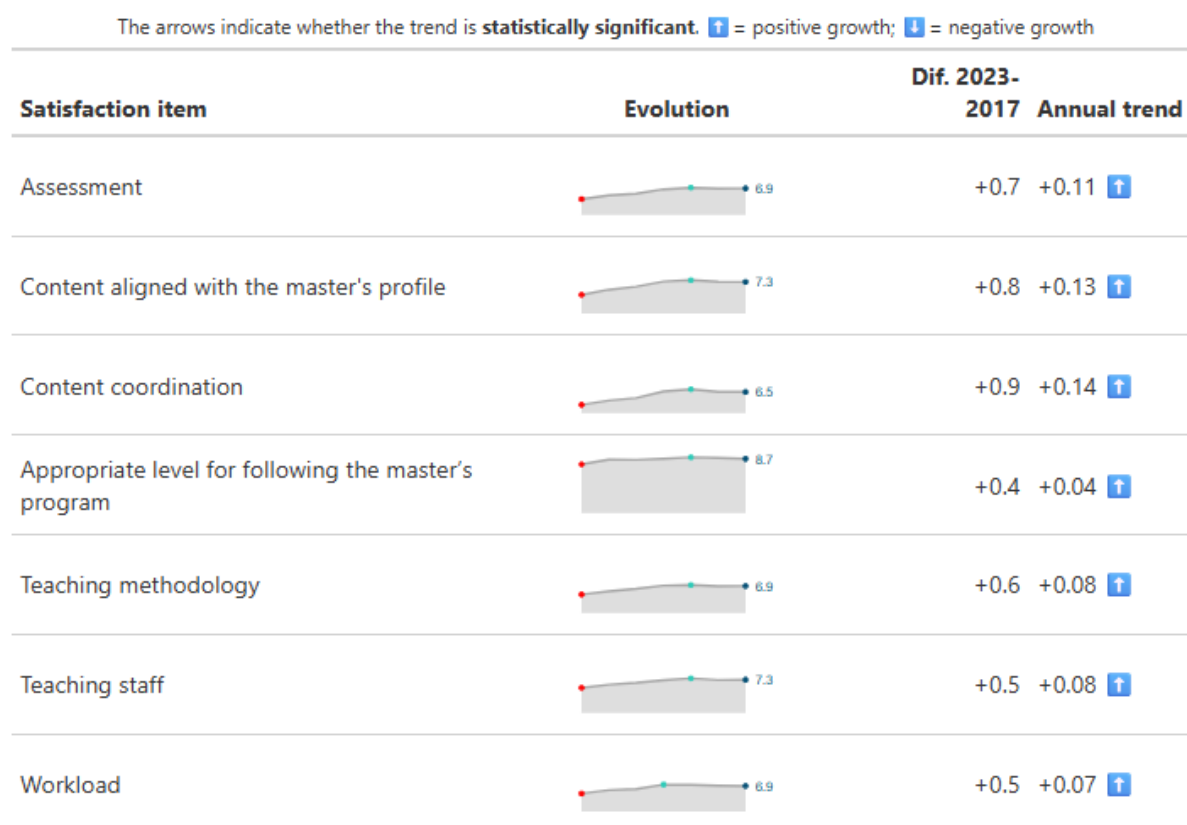
³ Result obtained from a linear regression model with overall satisfaction as the dependent variable and all the satisfaction items collected as independent variables. The full model explains 76.5% of the overall satisfaction of master's graduates. The importance of each factor was analysed using the Linderman, Merenda and Gold method (1980), available in the R *relaimpo* (Grömping, 2006) package. The use of a mixed model with teaching as the grouping level was ruled out because it emerged that there were no significant differences in overall satisfaction between disciplines. Other explanatory variables, such as the student's biological sex or their reasons for choosing the degree programme, were also ruled out because they did not contribute to explaining the differences in overall satisfaction. You can find the full results of this model in the appendix.

- A student's overall satisfaction with a master's degree largely depends on their attainment of professional and personal development and perception of teaching quality.
- Other factors, such as facilities or information on the website, have almost no impact on a student's overall satisfaction with their master's degree.

SATISFACTION OF MASTER'S DEGREE GRADUATES WITH TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

Evolution of the satisfaction of master's degree graduates with teaching and learning processes

Figure 4. Evolution and trend in the satisfaction of master's degree graduates with teaching and learning processes (2017-2023)



Technical note: the results are deemed statistically significant based on a linear regression model with the item as the dependent variable and the year of the graduating class surveyed as the independent variable.

- The two periods of growth and stabilisation can also be observed in graduates' satisfaction ratings for the teaching and learning items.
- The scores for suitability to the master's degree profile and its coordination are the items that saw the most significant improvement during the period analysed, stabilising at around 7.3 and 6.5, respectively. However, this last item is also the one with the most room for improvement.
- Only two items exceed 7 out of 10: suitability of content and teaching staff. The latter, together with workload and whether the prior academic level proved sufficient for pursuing the master's degree, are the items that saw the least improvement in their ratings between 2017 and 2023.

Which sub-fields excel and which show the most room for improvement?

Figure 5. Average satisfaction of master's degree graduates with the teaching and learning items, by expanded sub-field (2021-2023)

Expanded subfield	Content coordination	Workload	Teaching staff	Teaching methodology	Assessment	Appropriate level for following the master's program	Content aligned with the master's profile
Languages and Literature	7.2			7.5	7.6		7.9
Art and Design	5.6	7.5	6.6	6.3	6		6.5
Economics, Business and Tourism	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.6			
Education	5.6	5.6	6.7	6.1	6.4		6.5
Global SUC	6.6	6.9	7.3	6.9	6.9	8.8	7.3

Technical note: expanded sub-fields whose score is lower than the other SUC sub-fields are shown in red. Those with a higher score are shown in green. Those sub-fields that do not show any significant difference have been excluded to make the table easier to read. The differences are reported as significant based on an analysis of 1,000 simulations using the bootstrapping random sampling technique with replacement within the infinite population scenario (Efron i Tibshirani, 1994).

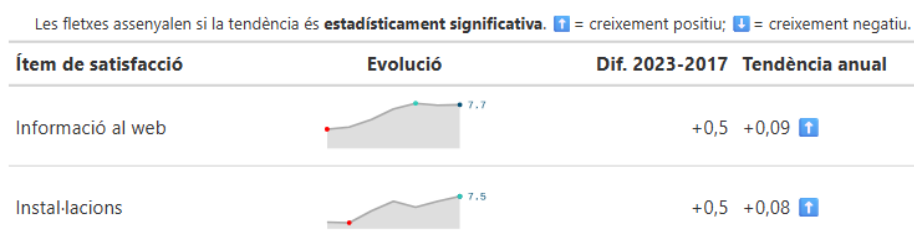
- Master's in the fields of Arts and Design and Education⁴ have the most room for improvement in the majority of the dimensions. Of particular note is the need for improvement in content coordination, which scores 1 point below the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC) average.
- The degrees in Languages and Literature and Economics, Business and Tourism stand out for their high satisfaction ratings in practically all the items.

⁴ For a more detailed analysis of satisfaction with the Master's Degree in Secondary School Teacher Training, the most popular degree in the Education sub-field, see the [2021 AQU Catalunya cross-sectional evaluation report](#).

STUDENTS FEEL THEY RECEIVE GOOD SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITIES

Evolution of satisfaction with student support

Figure 6. Evolution and trends in the satisfaction of master's degree graduates with the items relating to student support (2017-2023)



Technical note: the results are deemed statistically significant based on a linear regression model with the item as the dependent variable and the year of the graduating class surveyed as the independent variable.

- Satisfaction with the public information available on the website increased slightly until 2021, followed by a period of stabilisation, and has always remained above 7 out of 10.
- Despite suffering a slight decline following the COVID-19 health crisis, satisfaction with the facilities receives a good rating from graduates.

Which sub-fields excel and which show the most room for improvement?

Figure 7. Average satisfaction of master's degree graduates with the student support items, by expanded sub-field (2021-2023)

Expanded subfield	Facilities	Website information
Art and Design	6.5	6.8
Economics, Business and Tourism	7.9	8.1
Education	6.8	
Global SUC	7.4	7.7

Technical note: expanded sub-fields whose score is lower than the other SUC sub-fields are shown in red. Those with a higher score are shown in green. Those sub-fields that do not show any significant difference have been excluded to make the table easier to read. The differences are reported as significant based on an analysis of 1,000 simulations using the bootstrapping random sampling technique with replacement within the infinite population scenario (Efron i Tibshirani, 1994).

→ Most sub-fields receive excellent ratings, similar to the average for the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC).

→ Once again, the Economics, Business and Tourism sub-field scores particularly well, receiving high ratings.

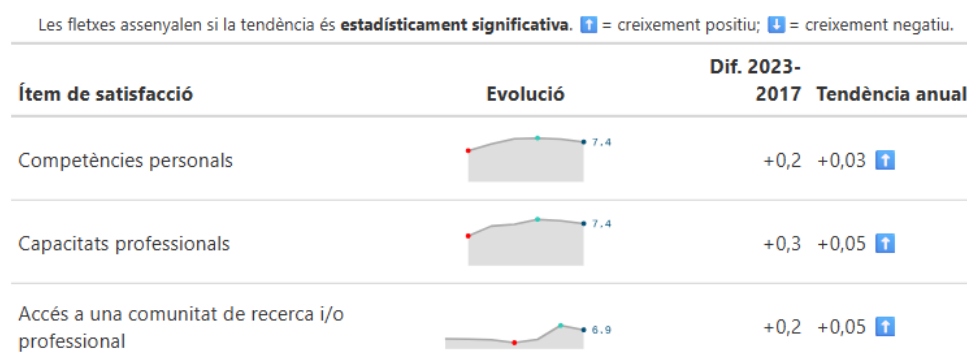
In terms of facilities, Education shows room for improvement compared to other sub-areas of the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC).

**Arts and Design scores
almost one point below
the overall average for
master's degrees.**

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING: POSITIVE AND STABLE ASSESSMENTS

Evolution of the satisfaction of master's graduates with student support

Figure 8. Evolution and trends in the satisfaction of master's degree graduates with their degree outcomes (2017-2023)



Technical note: the results are deemed statistically significant based on a linear regression model with the item as the dependent variable and the year of the graduating class surveyed as the independent variable.

→ Master's degree graduates are satisfied (7.4 out of 10) with their personal and professional development.

→ Despite scoring close to 7 out of 10, the ability of master's degrees to provide access to a research and/or professional community is the item with the most room for improvement. As demonstrated in the following section, this item shows high variability between degrees.

Which sub-fields excel and which show the most room for improvement?

Figure 9. Average satisfaction of master's degree graduates with the degree outcomes items, by expanded sub-field (2021-2023)

Expanded subfield	Access to the research and/or professional community	Personal competencies	Professional skills
Philosophy and History	6		6.9
Art and Design	5.1	6.7	6.5
Economics, Business and Tourism		8	7.9
Law, Labour Studies and Politics	6.3		
Communication and Documentation	6.2		
Education		6.6	7
Social Intervention	5.8		
Experimental Sciences and Mathematics	7.9		
Medicine and Biomedical Sciences	7.7		
ICT	7.7		
Global SUC	6.9	7.4	7.5

Technical note: expanded sub-fields whose score is lower than the other SUC sub-fields are shown in red. Those with a higher score are shown in green. Those sub-fields that do not show any significant difference have been excluded to make the table easier to read. The differences are reported as significant based on an analysis of 1,000 simulations using the bootstrapping random sampling technique with replacement within the infinite population scenario (Efron i Tibshirani, 1994).

→ By some distance, Social Sciences and Humanities show the most room for improvement in regards to satisfaction with networking.

→ Economics, Business and Tourism once again received good ratings in terms of personal and professional development.



In contrast, Art and Design and Education receive significantly low scores.

SATISFACTION WITH EXTERNAL WORK PLACEMENTS AND THE MASTER'S DEGREE DISSERTATION (TFM)

Evolution of the satisfaction of master's graduates with their external work placements and the master's dissertation (TFM)

Figure 10. Evolution and trends in the satisfaction of master's degree graduates with external work placements and the master's dissertation TFM (2017-2023)⁵

Les fletxes assenyalen si la tendència és **estadísticament significativa**. ↑ = creixement positiu; ↓ = creixement negatiu.

Ítem de satisfacció	Evolució	Dif. 2023-2017	Tendència anual
TFM		+0,1	+0,04 ↑
Pràctiques externes		+0,4	+0,07 ↑

Technical note: the results are deemed statistically significant based on a linear regression model with the item as the dependent variable and the year of the graduating class surveyed as the independent variable.

→ Satisfaction with external work placements and the master's dissertation (TFM) has undergone relatively minor changes between 2017 and 2023, but a rating of "very good" has been consolidated.

⁵ The results are deemed statistically significant based on a linear regression model with the item as the dependent variable and the year of the graduating class surveyed as the independent variable.

Which sub-fields excel and which show the most room for improvement?

Figure 11. Average satisfaction of master's degree graduates with the degree outcomes items, by expanded sub-field (2021-2023)

Expanded subfield	Work placements	Master's thesis (TFM)
Philosophy and History	6.6	8.1
Art and Design	5.5	6.6
Law, Labour Studies and Politics	6.6	
Education	7.8	6.9
Social Intervention	6.6	7
Biological and Earth Sciences	7.8	
Medicine and Biomedical Sciences	7.9	8
Industrial Technologies		8
ICT	7.6	8
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	5.9	
Global SUC	7.2	7.5

Technical note: expanded sub-fields whose score is lower than the other SUC sub-fields are shown in red. Those with a higher score are shown in green. Those sub-fields that do not show any significant difference have been excluded to make the table easier to read. The differences are reported as significant based on an analysis of 1,000 simulations using the bootstrapping random sampling technique with replacement within the infinite population scenario (Efron i Tibshirani, 1994).

→ Master's degree students in the field of Education report being very satisfied with their external work placements, which contrasts with the more modest ratings they give in other areas. The lowest rating in this area was given by students in Arts and Design

→ Degree programmes in Philosophy and History, together with those in Medicine and Biomedical Sciences and some Engineering, achieve a high level of satisfaction for the master's dissertation (TFM). Students in Arts and Design, by contrast, score this aspect the lowest, with the rating not reaching a 7.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AQU Catalunya thanks the following people for their contribution to the preparation of this work: Jaume Valls, Sandra Nieto, Núria Mancho, Dani Torrents.

This document has incorporated the use of generative artificial intelligence tools in specific tasks, such as the generation and modification of the R code used for the figures. The final content has been fully reviewed, validated and endorsed by the authors, who assume full responsibility for it.

Contributor Roles⁶

José Luis Mateos: Conceptualization; data analysis; investigation; project administration; software; visualization; writing. Anna Prades: Conceptualization; investigation; supervision; writing.

⁶ NISO CRediT Working Group. ANSI/NISO Z39.104-2022, [CRediT, Contributor Roles Taxonomy](#), NISO. 14 January 2022.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Full descriptors of the items used in this report

To enhance the readability of this report, we used simplified descriptors of the analysed items from the AQU Catalunya satisfaction survey. The full descriptors of the items that students were asked to evaluate in the survey are shown below, along with their corresponding simplified descriptors, which were used in this report.

Table 1. Correspondence between the simplified names given to the satisfaction items used in this report and the full descriptors that students are asked to evaluate in the satisfaction survey

Name of the item	Full descriptor
Structure of the study programme	The structure of the study programme has allowed me to progress appropriately in my learning.
Content coordination	The subjects have been carefully coordinated to avoid any overlap in content.
Workload	The workload has been consistent with the credits awarded for the subjects.
Teaching staff	I am satisfied with the teaching staff.
Teaching methodology	The teaching methodology used by the teaching staff has facilitated my learning.
Tutoring	The tutoring has been useful and has contributed to improving my learning.
Assessment	The assessment systems have allowed me to reflect on my learning effectively.
Facilities	The facilities (classrooms, teaching spaces, auditoriums, etc.) have been sufficient for my learning needs.
Library and teaching support	The resources provided by the library and teaching support services have met my needs.
Support services	The student support services (information, registration, academic procedures, scholarships, guidance, etc.) have offered me good advice and attention.
Response to complaints	I received an adequate response to my complaints and suggestions.
Information on	The information about the degree is accessible and I found it useful.

The satisfaction levels of master's degree graduates from Catalan universities (2017-2023)

the website	
Virtual campus	The use of the virtual campus has facilitated my learning.
Communication skills	The education received has allowed me to improve my communication skills.
Personal skills	The education received has helped me improve my personal skills (confidence, leadership, independent learning, creativity, problem solving, critical analysis, teamwork, etc.).
Professional competence	The education received has helped me improve my professional competence.
External work placements	External work placements have allowed me to apply the knowledge acquired during the degree course.”
Mobility	The mobility experiences I have undertaken have been relevant to my learning.
Master's dissertation (TFM)	The master's degree dissertation (TFM) helped me consolidate the competencies acquired during the degree programme.
Overall satisfaction	I am satisfied with the degree.

Appendix 2. Results of the growth and stabilisation models for the overall satisfaction of master's degree graduates (2017-2023)

Table 2. Results of the model for the growth phase (2017-21)

Term	Coefficient	Standard error
Intercept	6.29***	0.3
Graduating class surveyed	0.2***	0.1
<i>Reference category: Sciences</i>		
Social and Legal Sciences	-0.63*	0.3
Engineering	-0.42	0.3
Humanities	0.03	0.4
Health	0.31	0.3
Graduating class × Social and Legal Sciences	0.04	0.1
Graduating class × Engineering	0.03	0.1
Graduating class × Humanities	0	0.1
Graduating class × Health	-0.11	0.1
Observations	21,645	
R²	0.012	

Significance code: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01 & * p < 0.05.

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Table 3. Results of the model for the stabilisation phase (2022-2023)

Term	Coefficient	Standard error
Intercept	5.56***	1.6
Graduating class surveyed	0.22	0.2
<i>Reference category: Sciences</i>		
Social and Legal Sciences	2.81	1.7
Engineering	1.59	1.8
Humanities	1.98	2.2
Health	-0.74	2.0
Graduating class × Social and Legal Sciences	-0.37	0.2
Graduating class × Engineering	-0.2	0.2
Graduating class × Humanities	-0.24	0.3
Graduating class × Health	0.06	0.2
Observations	11,371	
R²	0.002	

Significance code: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01 & * p < 0.05.

Appendix 3. Evolution in the standard deviation of overall satisfaction among master's degree graduates (2017-2023)

Graduating class surveyed	Sample	Mean	Standard deviation
2017	2,498	6.5	2.91
2018	3,718	6.9	2.86
2019	5,029	7.0	2.84
2020	5,225	7.2	2.76
2021	5,290	7.3	2.67
2022	5,692	7.3	2.76
2023	5,722	7.3	2.73

Annex 4. Results of the multivariate model with overall satisfaction as the dependent variable

Table 4. Results of the multivariate model with overall satisfaction as the dependent variable (2021-2023)

Factor	Coefficient	Standard error	Contribution to R ²
Intercept	-0.89***	0.07	
Teaching staff	0.18***	0.01	11.6%
Content appropriate to the master's degree profile	0.15***	0.01	10.8%
Professional competence	0.2***	0.01	12.4%
Information on the website	0.04***	0.01	4.2%
Content coordination	0.13***	0.01	9.5%
Sufficient academic level for pursuing the master's degree	-0.03***	0.01	1.1%
Teaching methodology	0.12***	0.01	11.3%
Assessment	0.03***	0.01	7.1%
Workload	0.02***	0.01	4.8%
External work placements	0.02***	0.00	2.3%
Master's dissertation (TFM)	0.09***	0.01	5.6%
Facilities	0	0.01	3.1%
Access to a research and/or professional community	0.04***	0.01	5.1%
Personal skills	0.13***	0.01	11.0%
Observations	10,439		
R²	0.765		

Significance code: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01 & * p < 0.05.

Appendix 5. Data sheet for the AQU Catalunya Satisfaction Survey

Table 5. Characteristics of the AQU Catalunya Satisfaction Survey

Survey of master’s degree graduates from the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC)

Population	Individuals who graduated with an official master’s degree between 2017 and 2023.
Survey period	Between the December and January after graduation.
Methodology	CAWI without stratified sampling.
Approximate time taken	Between 4 and 6 minutes.

Table 6. Population, sample, response rate and sampling error for the last three editions of the study (2021–2023)

Population	Sample	Response rate	Sampling error
64,873	16,713	25.8%	0.7%

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Table 7. Population, sample, response rate, and sampling error by study edition (2017–2023)

Edition	Sample	Population	Response rate	Sampling error
2017	2,498	15,830	15.8%	1.8%
2018	3,718	19,432	19.1%	1.4%
2019	5,029	19,467	25.8%	1.2%
2020	5,225	20,262	25.8%	1.2%
2021	5,290	20,944	25.3%	1.2%
2022	5,692	21,695	26.2%	1.1%
2023	5,722	22,234	25.7%	1.1%

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