

**AQU CATALUNYA  
ANNUAL ACTIVITIES  
AND CORPORATE  
SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY  
REPORT**

**SUMMARISED  
VERSION**

**2021**



**AQU CATALUNYA**





**AQU CATALUNYA**

**AQU CATALUNYA ANNUAL  
ACTIVITIES AND CORPORATE  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT  
SUMMARISED VERSION**

**2021**

BARCELONA, 2022

© Autor: Agencia para la Calidad del Sistema Universitario de Cataluña, 2022  
C. d'Enric Granados, 33  
08007 Barcelona

Aprobada por el Consejo de Gobierno de AQU Catalunya el día 20 de abril de 2022

First edition: June 2022

The contents of this document are licensed under a [Creative Commons Public Domain License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (CC0 1.0 Universal). The work may be copied, modified, distributed and publicly communicated, including for commercial purposes, without requiring permission of any kind.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2. INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMME QUALITY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1. Programme review .....	10
2.2. Institutional review .....	18
2.3. Accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks .....	23
2.4. Support for the internationalisation of the Catalan university system .....	24
<b>3. TEACHING STAFF QUALITY.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1. Assessment of teaching staff prior to university selection processes .....	27
3.2. Accreditation of merits in research, teaching and management.....	30
<b>4. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER.....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1. Surveys and indicators of the higher education system in Catalonia .....	34
4.2. Studies and reports.....	38
<b>COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER.....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1. Knowledge transfer .....	40
5.2. Communication tools.....	47
<b>COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6. Strategic Management.....</b>	<b>50</b>
6.1. Strategic management .....	50
6.2. Governing, QA and advisory bodies .....	51
6.3. Expert assessment staff .....	52
<b>7. INTERNAL ORGANISATION .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>COMMITMENT TO ALLIANCES .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>8. ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL AGENTS IN CATALONIA.....</b>	<b>55</b>

<b>9. INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>10. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS .....</b>	<b>58</b>
10.1. International institutional relations .....	58
10.2. International projects, reviews and exchange .....	59
<b>COMMITMENT TO SAFE AND ETHICAL WORKING CONDITIONS.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>11. INTERNAL ORGANISATION .....</b>	<b>63</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Once again this year, as is mandatory, AQU Catalunya has produced its Annual Activities and Corporate Social Responsibility Report in order to offer accountability to the university community and society at large on the work it carried out in 2021.

The content that you will find in this report is undoubtedly indebted to the work and leadership of the previous director, Martí Casadesús, whom we had the opportunity to explicitly acknowledge and thank at the ceremony to commemorate the 25th anniversary of AQU Catalunya for the dedication and good work that characterised the Agency's management during the eight years he was at the helm.

During 2021 AQU Catalunya maintained its online activities in light of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, AQU Catalunya has worked with the same intensity and at the same pace as it would have if it were working face-to-face, thanks to its full technological adaptation to the virtual environment. As of 1 September, the Agency has begun to return to some semblance of normality, with staff returning to face-to-face work through a shift system that has made it possible to create stable bubbles. So far, the health and safety measures put in place have maintained a level of zero infections in the Agency's face-to-face work.

By reading this report, an executive summary of which can be found in the following section, the reader will be able to see the volume and diversity of activities that we carry out at the Agency, with a budget of 5.4 million euros, 54 staff members and 854 external experts who are members of AQU Catalunya's commissions and committees.

Of the activities carried out in 2021 that you can find in this report, I will highlight some below. First of all, I would like to mention five activities that are important due to their international scope:

- > **The accreditation of AQU Catalunya by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).** AQU Catalunya is the first Spanish and fifth European agency to be accredited by the World Federation for Medical Education. Therefore, from now on, all the Faculties of Medicine that are accredited under these standards which AQU Catalunya has integrated will also have this worldwide accreditation. This accreditation also has implications for people who graduate from accredited medical schools (for example, from 2024 onwards, graduates wishing to practice medicine in the United States must have graduated from a centre accredited in compliance with these standards).
- > **Advances in relation to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).** The Research Assessment Commission's work on this declaration has resulted in the inclusion, in the criteria for faculty accreditation, of a preamble to emphasise the specific characteristics and functions of these processes and a criterion for detecting and dealing with publications whose editorial behaviour may compromise scientific quality.
- > **Assessment of inter-university degrees in line with the European Approach.** AQU Catalunya has used the new assessment methodology in two inter-university programmes offered jointly

by higher education institutions in two or more states, with the aim of simplifying the assessment processes so that these degrees need only be assessed in one of the states participating in the degree programme. This has been a very enriching experience to learn about the strengths and weaknesses in the framework of the European Higher Education Area.

- > **The verification of short learning programmes.** This new activity, which has verified the design of seven programmes and 34 proposals submitted by the universities, opens up a line of action that can support universities in initiatives aimed at promoting continuous professional development and lifelong learning. This is an area that is gaining special relevance in Europe and where I believe it can be said, with good reason, that Catalonia has shown clear leadership.
- > **The support to establish INQAAHE's permanent headquarters in Barcelona.** Since this international association of quality agencies chose Barcelona as the location for its permanent headquarters, with the support of AQU Catalunya, in 2020, the Agency has actively collaborated in the process of establishing the association's permanent headquarters in this city, which has now been completed.

These are activities which, in a way, can be considered pioneering in their fields and which demonstrate a desire to launch and develop innovative projects which will eventually bring added value to the Catalan university system.

In terms of studies, it is worth highlighting that in 2021 we carried out a study entitled ***Women's Employment Outcomes Twenty Years after Finishing University***. This innovative study adds to the knowledge generated by the Agency's two previous studies to analyse the impact of gender three years after graduation (published in 2010) and ten years after (published in 2012). The results of the study provide knowledge on how motherhood affects the careers of women with university degrees and should be placed within the framework of AQU Catalunya's commitment to the gender perspective – a commitment that is clear and pervasive in all its activities.

Two relevant issues arose in autumn 2021 that will have a strong impact on the Agency's activities during 2022:

- > **The start of AQU Catalunya's international external review** of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) have accepted AQU Catalunya's application to carry out international external review of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as a targeted review, thus becoming the first European agency to test out this simplified form of assessment. Passing this assessment is essential to ensure that AQU Catalunya's assessment decisions are recognised by the rest of the European countries.
- > **The adaptation to the approval of Royal Decrees 640/2021 and 822/2021.** As is well known, these decrees directly affect the Agency in terms of its work for the institutional accreditation of centres, the organisation of teaching and university quality assurance, and will undoubtedly have a very significant impact on institutional and programme assessment activities. During

2021, the impact of these Royal Decrees was analysed and AQU Catalunya began the process of adapting the methodology in order to prepare for the transition of the assessment activities to a new context.

Finally, it should be remembered that 2021 was also the year in which we commemorated the 25th anniversary of AQU Catalunya and in which the Agency's corporate image was updated. It is in this context that I have had the opportunity to join as Director, taking over from Martí Casadesús and with the desire to continue his legacy (and that of his predecessors) and to work to maintain the prestige and recognition that the Agency has achieved thus far. I can only express my gratitude for the confidence that the President of AQU Catalunya has shown in my appointment as Director, after passing the mandatory selection process, and for the warm welcome that I have so far received from the Agency staff, the members of its Governing Board, the heads of the Ministry of Research and Universities and many other people who form part of the Catalan university system and with whom I have had the opportunity to interact since the beginning of my term of office.

In any case, the results presented in this report are the result of the work and good judgement of the Agency's staff, the support and collaboration of the heads of Catalan universities and the Ministry of Research and Universities, and the numerous experts who collaborate with AQU Catalunya. All these people, with their good judgement and dedication, have responded to the changing needs caused by the pandemic and make the activity of the Agency what it is. Many thanks!

**Jaume Valls Pasola**  
**Director**

# COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## 2. INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMME QUALITY

This chapter describes all the activities related to the external quality assessment of official university degrees and the centres that offer them.

The assessment committees in charge of this task are the Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee and its specific committees.

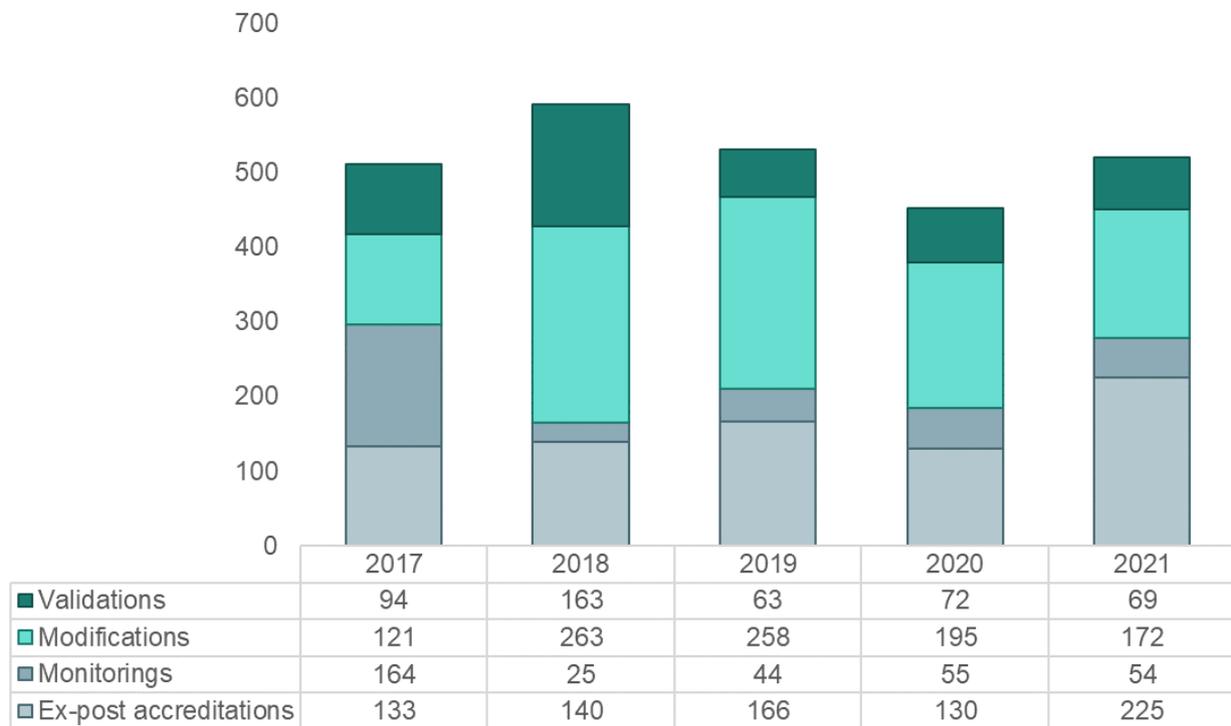
### 2.1. Programme review

In 2010 AQU Catalunya adopted the [Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of degree programmes](#) (VSMA Framework), which was subsequently updated in 2016 so as to establish a cyclical and harmonious system for the external review and quality assurance of recognised degree programmes and Arts higher education programmes delivered in higher education institutions in Catalonia.

The VSMA Framework establishes the relationship between the processes of **validation**, or ex-ante accreditation, which takes place prior to the introduction of programmes; the **monitoring** of programme delivery; the **modification** of programmes so that enhancements detected during the monitoring stage can be incorporated; and **ex-post accreditation**, whereby a panel of experts undertakes a external site visit to verify that programme delivery is taking place as planned. For delivery purposes, recognised degree programmes are required to undergo and pass a cyclical accreditation procedure.

Developments in the implementation of the VSMA Framework in Catalonia over the last five years were as follows:

Figure 1. Developments in validation, monitoring, modification and Accreditation<sup>1</sup> (2017–2021)<sup>2</sup>



The number of degrees that underwent the accreditation process during 2021 increased with respect to 2020 (95 more degrees), while the number of degrees that were assessed in the framework of the other assessment processes (validation, monitoring and modification) remained the same. This is due to the performance of degree accreditation processes that were postponed during 2020 due to the pandemic. Specifically, in 2020, 20% of the initially planned visits ( $n = 84$ ) were postponed and had to be made up during 2021.

In 2021, Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance, was approved. This Royal Decree repeals and replaces the previous Royal Decree 1393/2007 and has made it necessary to begin adapting numerous aspects of assessment methodologies and procedures, which will be completed in 2022.

<sup>1</sup> The graph shows the following indicators:

- Validation: number of degree programmes that have applied for validation.
- Monitoring: number of follow-ups carried out for degree programmes (including validation and accreditation).
- Modification: number of degree programmes that have applied for modification.
- Accreditation: number of degree programmes visited as part of the external accreditation visit process.

<sup>2</sup> Includes higher arts education equivalent to bachelor's and master's degrees.

Likewise, the aforementioned Royal Decree has made it necessary to revise the planning of accreditation visits, as it states that university master's degree accreditations must now be renewed every six years. In particular, this has led us to postpone the accreditation of 49 master's programmes.

In 2021, AQU Catalunya carried out the external accreditation process visits and the meetings of the specific assessment committees in a virtual format. It has also agreed that external visits in 2022 will be carried out on a combined virtual and face-to-face basis, health and safety conditions permitting.

### Validation, modification and monitoring

The purpose of [validation](#), which is an ex-ante accreditation procedure, is to ensure the design quality of all proposals for first degrees (bachelors), masters and doctoral/PhD degrees prior to their introduction. The Agency carried out a preliminary assessment of the proposals for official bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at Catalan universities for implementation in the academic year 2022-2023.

In terms of methodology, the *Guide to the formulation and validation of proposals for recognised university bachelor's and master's degree programmes* was revised in 2021. The new version of the document incorporates the adaptation to the new legislation related to the eradication of gender-based violence and the application of the gender perspective in learning outcomes (article 17 of Law 5/2008 of 24 April, on the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence, modified by Law 17/2020 of 22 December), and Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres and the institutional accreditation of university centres. The definition of the teaching modalities for university degrees has also been approved: face-to-face, blended and distance learning.

A total number of 69 proposals were submitted for validation by universities in Catalonia in 2021: 30 first degrees/bachelors, 36 masters and 3 doctoral programmes. 93% of all the proposals submitted for validation were successful: 100% of the first degrees/bachelors, 90% of the masters and 100% of the doctoral/PhD programmes.

Official university degrees have obtained the corresponding seal, distinguishing them from those that have not passed this process.



In monitoring, an institution can either correct any observed deviations or propose enhancements for excellence and prepare for a subsequent accreditation procedure.

In 2020, the Agency monitored 24 programmes that had been previously accredited and granted accreditation that was conditional, and 30 programmes with requirements in the ex-ante accreditation reports. Out of a total of 54 programmes at 32 faculties and schools, 22 were first degrees/bachelors (16 university bachelor's degrees and 6 higher vocational programmes), 21 masters (14 university master's degrees and 7 Arts higher education master's programmes), 11 PhD degrees.

As for applications to modify currently running courses of study, 172 proposals to make modifications in the 2021-2022 academic year were received in 2021: 63 first degrees/bachelors, 100 masters and 9 doctoral/PhD programmes.

In overall terms, 98% of the modification applications were accepted.

### Verification of short-term programmes

Higher education in Catalonia comprises university, arts and professional studies. There is scope in this scenario for developing new links between higher education and vocational training. Short learning programmes can provide an opportunity to establish bridges between the two educational systems (academic and vocational), as well as to promote lifelong learning.

In 2021, the *Guide to ex-ante accreditation of short learning programmes* was revised. Its aim is to help those responsible for drafting proposals while at the same time offering an instrument for the external and independent assessment of these proposals by AQU Catalunya.

During 2021, seven short learning programmes linked to the field of information and communication technology (ICT) were assessed. Specifically, the designs of seven programmes and 34 proposals from universities were assessed, and the Specific Commission for Engineering and Architecture assessed and issued the relevant reports.

Overall, the assessments of the designs of the seven programmes were favourable.

Table 1. Proposals for programme design validation (2021)

Proposal
Android Mobile Developer
Cloud Deployer
Gestió de projectes d'implementació CRM
Data Scientist
Front End Web Developer
Java Back End Web Developer
Open Source Back End Web Developer

With regard to the assessments of the 34 proposals from universities, 33 proposals were successful and one proposal was withdrawn by the university itself (UPC).

Table 2. Result of the assessment (2021)<sup>3</sup>

	UAB	UdG	UdL	UOC	UPC	UPF	URL	URV	UVic-UCC
Android Mobile Developer	-	-	F	F	D	-	F	F	F
Cloud Deployer	F	-	-	F	F	F	F	-	-
Gestió de projectes d'implementació CRM	F	F	-	-	F	-	-	-	-
Data Scientist	F	F	-	F	-	F	F	-	-
Front End Web Developer	F		F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Java Back End Web Developer	F	-	-	-	-	F	F	-	-
Open Source Back End Web Developer	F	-	-	-	-	-	F	-	F

<sup>3</sup> F: favourable; D: withdrawn (proposals for which the assessment process is not completed).

Degree programmes that receive a favourable assessment are awarded a quality label which is valid for six years.

### Accreditation

Accreditation is the establishment, by way of a site visit, that the study programme is being delivered as planned according to validation (the ex ante accreditation stage).

All recognised degree courses must undergo accreditation within six years of validation (or within six years of a previous accreditation). Site visits are planned jointly by AQU Catalunya and the universities on an annual basis.

### *Site visits*

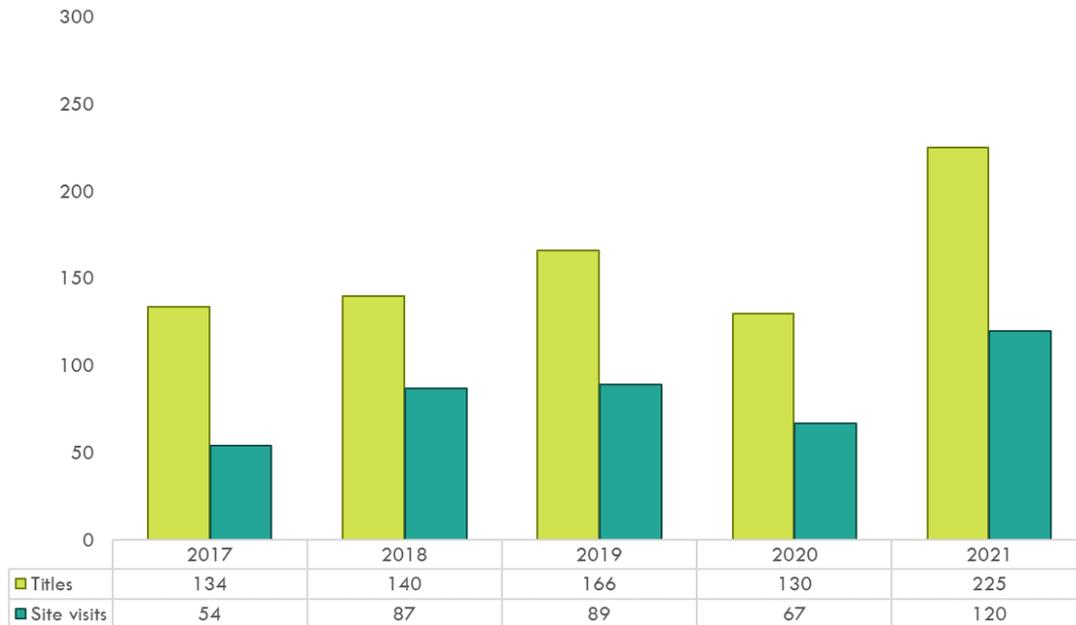
In 2021 the visits were carried out virtually as a result of the pandemic, except for those linked to the accreditation of medical degrees as they followed the standards of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), which require a face-to-face visit by the panel of experts.

During 2021, 121 external site visits were organised to review and evaluate the delivery of 225 degree programmes. Seventy-two (72) of these were first degrees/bachelors (1 of which, higher vocational programme), 96 masters (8 of which, Arts higher education master's programmes), 57 doctoral/PhD programmes.

In order to ensure the proper functioning of the external review committees and consistent application of the criteria, 13 training sessions were held for the assessment committees, all of them virtual, which were attended by 132 people (121 members and 11 methodological secretaries).

**120 external visits were  
carried out to assess 225  
degree programmes**

Figure 2. Evolution of external visits to centres and and of degree programmes assessed (2017-2021)



### Accreditation reports

During 2021, AQU Catalunya issued 108 accreditation reports for recognised degree programmes. 14% of the programmes granted accreditation received a qualification of on-track-to-excellence. In the case of the conditional accreditation, programmes must submit a progress report within two years, showing that any shortcomings identified have been resolved.

Table 3. Results of accreditation by programme level (2021)

	Accreditation with prescriptions	Accreditation	Accreditation on track to excellence	Total	Accreditation on track to excellence (%)
Bachelor degrees	5	38	1	44	2%
Master degrees	8	42	10	60	17%
PhDs	-	-	4	4	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>14%</b>

Recognised bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, and higher arts education bachelor's and master's degrees



In 2021, 14% of the programmes granted accreditation received a qualification of on-track-to-excellence

### *Results according to the dimensions assessed*

As regards the evaluation of the dimensions assessed in the accreditation process, in all cases these were generally positive. However, differences were observed between the dimensions.

In 2021, the dimension of 'suitability to teach of staff on the programme' is the one that obtained the highest assessment, with 19% of the degree programmes (30% over the five-year period 2017-2021) achieving it on track towards excellence; furthermore, it is the dimension with the highest percentage of accreditations with prescriptions, with 25% of cases in 2021 (19% over the last five years).

Public information is the dimension with the highest level of assessment with prescriptions in 2021, at 27% of the degrees, while this figure was 16% over the last five years.

Table 4. Results according to the evaluation of the dimensions assessed (2021)

Dimensions	Accreditation on track to excellence		Accreditation		Accreditation with prescriptions	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Programme quality	-	-	98	90.7%	10	9.3%
Relevance of the public information	5	4.6%	74	68.5%	29	26.9%
Efficacy of the programme's internal quality assurance system	-	-	100	92.6%	8	7.4%
The suitability to teach of staff on the programme	21		60	55.6%	27	25.0%
Efficiency of learning support systems	12	11.1%	91	84.3%	5	4.6%
Quality of programme outcomes	16	%	90	83.3%	2	1.9%

## 2.2. Institutional review

In line with the Agency's Strategic Plan for 2019-2022, AQU Catalunya began to give more impetus to institutional review at faculty level, which will gradually replace programme review. Institutional accreditation and the certification of IQAs (internal quality assurance system) implementation are the first set of actions that deal with this strategic objective.

### Certification of internal quality assurance system implementation

The [IQAs certification programme](#) verifies that an internal quality assurance system (IQAs) has been implemented in the faculty/school responsible for the delivery of the degree programmes covered by the IQAs, and that it is fit for purpose in terms of programme quality assurance.

The *Guide to Internal Quality Assurance System Implementation Certification* provides for the option of assessing, prior to the certification of the centres' IQA systems, the cross-disciplinary elements applied by the IQA systems of centres integrated into the universities. There is no certificate granted at the end of the process, although the results are taken into account in the subsequent certification of the centres' IQA systems.

Thus, during 2021, the process began for the assessment of the cross-disciplinary elements of the IQAs of three universities.

Table 5. Universities taking part in the cross-disciplinary assessment process (2021)

University	Result
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	Favourable
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya	In process
Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya	In process

As established in the methodology, the external review committees may decide to carry out a preliminary visit to analyse the key aspects of the implementation of the IQA system, request additional information and, ultimately, decide whether to continue with the certification process in accordance with the plan initially agreed with the universities. All participating universities and centres have considered the preliminary visit as a phase in the process of assessing the cross-disciplinary elements and certification of the IQA systems.

At the centre level, 11 pre-certification visits for the implementation of IQA systems were carried out.

Table 6. Centres that have received a preliminary visit (2021)

Institution	University
Facultad de Derecho	UB
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras	UAB
Escuela de Ingeniería	UAB
Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación	UAB
Facultad y Departamento de Economía y Empresa	UPF
Facultad y Departamento de Derecho	UPF
Facultad y Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación	UPF
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas	URV
Facultad de Letras	URV
Facultad de Derecho, Economía y Turismo	UdL
Facultad de Comunicación y Relaciones Internacionales	URL

In addition, external visits were carried out in 13 centres as part of the process of certifying the implementation of their IQA systems, with a favourable outcome for all those for which the process has been completed.

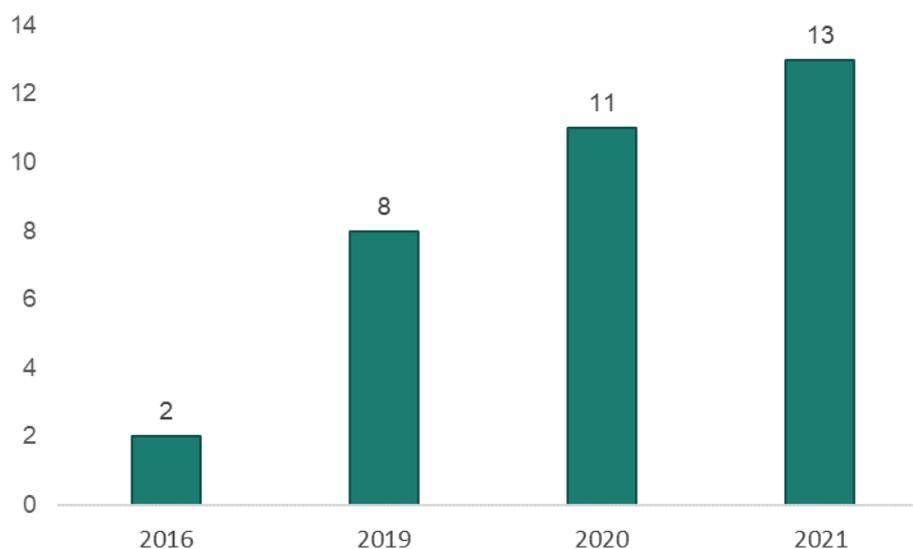
Table 7. Centres taking part in participants in the IQAS implementation certification process (2021)

Institution	University	Result
Facultad de Derecho	UB	Pending
Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras	UAB	Favourable
Escuela de Ingeniería	UAB	Pending
Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación	UAB	Pending
Facultad y Departamento de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales	UPF	Favourable
Facultad y Departamento de Economía y Empresa	UPF	Favourable
Facultad y Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación	UPF	Favourable
Facultad y Departamento de Derecho	UPF	Pending
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas	URV	Favourable
Facultad de Letras	URV	Pending
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	UOC	Favourable

Centres that certify their internal quality assurance system receive a certificate and a seal as a tool for differentiation.



Figure 3. Evolution of the number of centres visited in the IQAS implementation certification process (2016-2021)



Given the effects of the pandemic, the visits associated with the certification process (preliminary visit and certification visit) were virtual visits.

In terms of methodology, during 2021 the document *Criteria for drawing up reports for Quality Assurance System Implementation Certification* was revised and the document *10 keys to reducing amendments to a certification report* was drawn up, the aim of which is to guide the assessment committees through the drafting of the certification visit report. The revision of the *Guide to the Assessment of Internal Quality Assurance System Design for Higher Arts Programmes* was also published, in order to adapt it to the same structure as the other assessment guides, to link it to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* and to specify the Specific Certification Committee as the body responsible for approving the designs presented by centres that offer higher arts education.

The Institutional and Programme Review Commission has approved an agreement in which it has adjusted the validity of the IQA system certification from five to six years, in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres and the institutional accreditation of university centres.

Finally, with the aim of training the members of the external assessment committees, AQU Catalunya organised two training sessions in which twenty-six experts took part.

### Institutional accreditation

In Catalonia [Institutional accreditation](#) is a voluntary quality assurance process in which the quality of the programmes offered by university centres, their roll-out, services and processes are assessed externally to determine whether they meet the standards established in a scheme of continuous improvement. If these conditions are met, the Agency grants accredited centre status

for a maximum period of six years, which allows the centre to continue operating under the legal scheme of institutional accreditation and AQU Catalunya's Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees (MVSMA).

In 2021, 17 centres obtained a favourable assessment report for institutional accreditation (the resolution of the Spanish Universities Council is still pending for four of these centres). This brings the number of institutionally accredited centres in Catalonia up to 28.

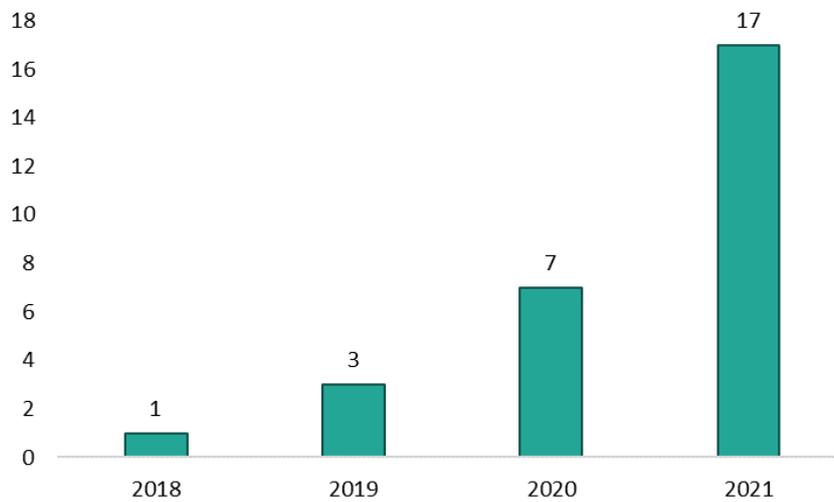
**Table 8. Institutionally accredited university centres in the Catalan university system (2021)**

Centro	University	Result
Facultad de Química	UB	Favourable
Facultad de Economía y Empresa	UB	Favourable
Facultad de Biociencias	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Economía y Empresa	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras	UAB	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación	UAB	Favourable
Barcelona Graduate School of Economics	UPF	Favourable
Facultad y Departamento de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales	UPF	Favourable
Facultad y Departamento de Economía y Empresa	UPF	Pending resolution
Facultad y Departamento de Comunicación	UPF	Pending resolution
Facultad Internacional de Comercio y Economía Digital	URL	Favourable
Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería	URL	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación y Psicología	URV	Favourable
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas	URV	Pending resolution
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	UOC	Pending resolution

Institutionally accredited centres may use the seal that identifies them as AQU Catalunya accredited centres.



Figure 4. Evolution of the number of centres receiving favourable assessment for institutional accreditation (2018–2021)<sup>4</sup>



In 2021, the *Guide to the Institutional Accreditation of University Centres*, which operationalises the *Standards and criteria for the institutional accreditation of university centres*, was approved. It is intended to provide guidance for universities on the aspects that AQU Catalunya will analyse in order to verify that the standards are being achieved, and is the first reference document for universities regarding the institutional accreditation programme. It follows the same structure as the aforementioned standards and criteria and describes what AQU Catalunya will assess for each key issue and what evidence and indicators the institution could provide to demonstrate that it is achieving the corresponding standards.

## 2.3. Accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks

Since 2003, AQU Catalunya has been working with Catalan universities on the development and application of models for the [assessment of their teaching staff](#), with the aim of helping universities to design their own mechanisms for managing the teaching quality of their academic staff and promoting their development and recognition, in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

In 2021, AQU Catalunya renewed the accreditation of the teaching assessment handbooks of all Catalan public universities for a period of five years, until 31 December 2026. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment process (training and accreditation visits) has been conducted virtually.

---

<sup>4</sup> In 2021, of the 17 centres with a favourable report, the resolution of the Spanish Universities Council is still pending for four of them.

Each university has received a report with the main conditions and recommendations for the improvement of its model. The most salient conclusions that have emerged across the board for all public universities are as follows:

- > Have specific and systematised procedures in place to specify institutional actions in the event of unfavourable assessments.
- > Move forward the implementation of mechanisms that allow for the recognition of teaching excellence.
- > Apply the teaching assessment criteria and procedures to the teaching staff of the affiliated centres.

## 2.4. Support for the internationalisation of the Catalan university system

AQU Catalunya has identified the internationalisation of university education in Catalonia as one of the areas for promoting excellence in higher education. It uses different mechanisms to support this: the additional dimension of internationalisation, stopped in 2020 due to lack of resources, and subject-specific certifications.

Two activities were carried out in 2021 in this area: the assessment of inter-university programmes according to the European Approach, and the accreditation of AQU Catalunya according to the World Federation for Medical Education.

Universities have also been supported through the integrated accreditation process for the purpose of allowing them to obtain international subject-specific certifications such as EUR-ACE® and Euro-Inf.

### Assessment of inter-university programmes according to the European Approach

In 2015, higher education ministers approved the [European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes](#) (EA) at the Yerevan conference, with the aim of simplifying joint programme external assessment processes. By using common standards, the European Approach should enable these programmes to be assessed in only one of the states participating in the programme.

The European Approach can only be applied to joint programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions **from two or more countries**.

In 2021, AQU Catalunya verified the university master's degree in Transfusion Medicine and Cell and Tissue Therapies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and, within the framework of an international project, the Master in Global Challenges for Sustainability at Trinity College Dublin, following the European Approach methodology. AQU Catalunya also participated as an observer in

the accreditation of the Erasmus Mundus Master Program in Public Policy MAPP, which is coordinated by the Central European University and in which the Barcelona Institute of International Studies (UPF) participates, a process that was coordinated by the Dutch agency NVAO.

Throughout the year, various measures have been carried out to provide information about the project, including the organisation of the webinar [European Approach: challenges and opportunities for Catalan universities](#), in which almost 200 people took part. The webinar looked at the challenges of this approach from the point of view of external assessment and the difficulties and opportunities arising from the experiences of Catalan universities that have recently assessed programmes following this methodology.

### Accreditation according to the World Federation for Medical Education

The internationalisation of medical education in quality assurance procedures is an important issue at the present time. AQU Catalunya is fully aware of the growing interest in the international accreditation of basic medical education and for this reason it is placing special emphasis on introducing the global standards of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) in current accreditation procedures.



In 2021, AQU Catalunya was accredited by the WFME, meaning all the medical schools that AQU Catalunya accredits under these standards will also receive this worldwide accreditation. The first degrees in Medicine to be accredited by AQU Catalunya following the WFME standards were those taught at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Girona and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of the International University of Catalonia.

### Subject-specific certifications

In accordance with the [Framework for the positioning of AQU Catalunya regarding subject-specific quality labels](#), the Agency has carried out an assessment for the accreditation of qualifications and an assessment for the award of the EUR-ACE® international subject-specific certification, as detailed below:

#### ***Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya - Barcelona School of Informatics***

##### *Euro-Inf label*

- > Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering
- > University Master's Degree in Computer Engineering
- > Master in Innovation and Research in Informatics

***Universitat de Lleida - Technical School***

*EUR-ACE® label*

- > Bachelor's Degree in Engineering in Industrial Electronics and Automation
- > Bachelor's Degree in Energy and Sustainability Engineering
- > Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering

*Euro-Inf label*

- > Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering

In addition, AQU Catalunya acted as an observer in the accreditation organised by ABET of the Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering offered by the La Salle School of Engineering (Ramon Llull University), following the procedure established by this accreditation board.

### 3. TEACHING STAFF QUALITY

University teaching staff assessment carried out by AQU Catalunya is structured as follows:

- > **Assessment of the Teaching staff:** AQU Catalunya certifies that applicants meet a minimum threshold of quality and/or scientific and/or production experience as a preliminary step to entering competitions for positions at universities for each of the posts established in Catalonia (tenure-eligible, associate professor and full professor).
- > **Merits Assessment:** AQU Catalunya assesses teaching, research and management merits for remuneration purposes in the case of teaching staff at public universities.

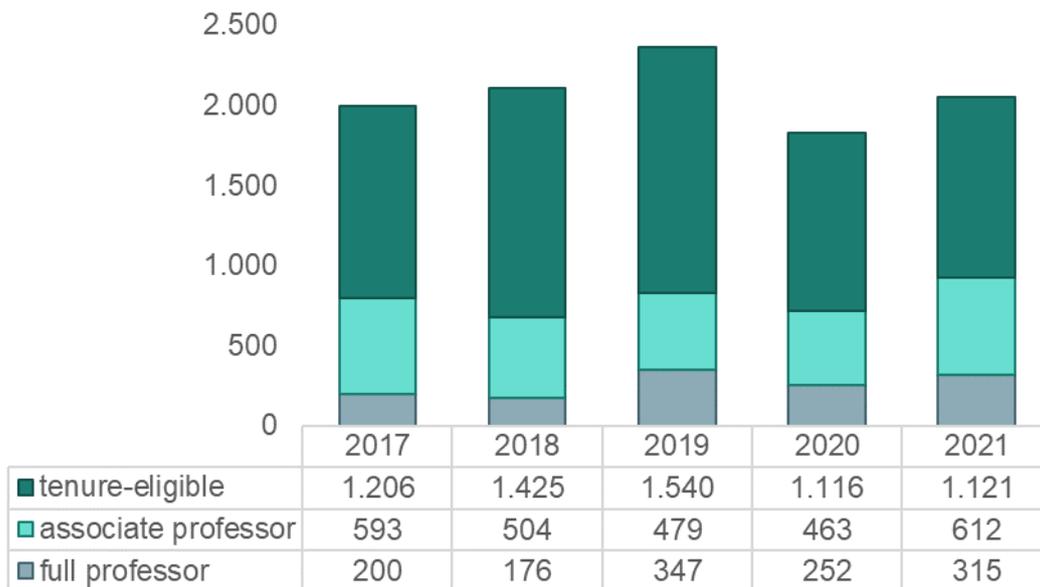
These activities are carried out by the Research Assessment Commission and its specific committees. In addition to the assessment activities detailed below, the Research Assessment Commission has discussed and made progress in the following areas: it has drawn up a preamble emphasising the specific characteristics and functions of the faculty accreditation processes carried out by AQU Catalunya; it has agreed to incorporate into the assessment criteria the matter of how to deal with publications whose editorial behaviour may compromise scientific quality; to carry out more precise assessments, it has split the specific commission for the assessment of social science teachers into two sub-commissions; it has modified the assessment criteria for all the commissions, and especially for the calls for tenure-eligible lecturers and for the assessment of research in Nursing and Physiotherapy; and it has discussed the implications for its activity of Law 17/2020 of 22 December amending Law 5/2008 on the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence.

#### 3.1. Assessment of teaching staff prior to university selection processes

In order to be admitted to the selection processes for tenured faculty at Catalan public universities, interested parties must have received a favourable report, in the case of the category of tenure-eligible lecturer, and accreditation of research or advanced research, for the categories of assistant lecturer and professor. Thus, accreditation is a mechanism established by the regulations that allows an external agent (AQU Catalunya) to assess whether applicants meet a minimum threshold of quality and/or scientific experience and/or production as a prior step to applying for positions at universities. As such, accreditations do not serve to establish rankings or hierarchies of individuals or to guarantee employment contracts.

In 2021 1,831 applications were received, 12% more than in 2020.

Figure 5. Trend in the number of applications from tenure-eligible lecturers, senior lecturers and professors (2017-2021)



### Lecturer accreditation reports

The post of tenure-eligible lecturer is the first of the contractual teaching posts to exist. It offers the possibility of promotion to higher posts with an indefinite contract (associate professor and full professor). Since the launch of the [Report for tenure-eligible lecturers](#) in 2003, the Agency has assessed some 14,000 applications.

Four calls for applications from tenure-eligible lecturers were launched in 2021: two ordinary calls and two specific ones for candidates applying through the Serra Húnter programme. A total number of 1,121 applications were received. This was an increase of 0,5% compared to 2020.

Under the Serra Húnter programme, 390 applications were received in the two specific calls for applications launched in 2021, which was a decrease of 10.9 % compared to the previous year.

The Research Assessment Committee has an express procedure for issuing the report for tenure-eligible lectures, which, in exceptional cases, allows applicants who meet certain requirements to submit an application for the issuance of a tenure-eligible lecturer’s report throughout the year.

In addition, in 2021, the applications submitted in the second assessment calls of the previous year were resolved.

## Reports for non-permanent contract teaching staff under the Serra Húnter programme

New [reports for non-permanent contract teaching staff](#) began to be issued under the Serra Húnter programme for the first time in 2019. These reports are designed for teaching staff at public universities in Catalonia with a tenure-eligible lecturer contract within the framework of the Serra Húnter programme.

The eligibility requirements to apply for a report of this kind are a current contract as a tenure-eligible lecturer under the Serra Húnter programme and possession of a positive accreditation of research issued by AQU Catalunya.

The issuance of this report continued in 2021. The call was open throughout the year and twenty-six applications were submitted, of which fourteen were successful, two unsuccessful, eight were closed without evaluation and one is still in the process of evaluation.

## Accreditation of research and advanced research

Access to the university as a permanent contracted doctoral lecturer is possible in the categories of **assistant lecturer**, which implies proven teaching and research capacity, and **professor**, which implies a consolidated teaching and research career.

In order to be admitted to the selection processes, candidates must have a [research accreditation](#) to access the category of associate professor, or an [advanced research accreditation](#), for access to the category of full professor.

Since 2003, AQU Catalunya has assessed 12,332 applications for research and advanced research accreditations.

Four calls for applications for the accreditation of research and four calls for the accreditation of advanced research were launched in 2021: two ordinary calls for research accreditation and two specific ones for candidates applying through the Serra Húnter programme, together with two ordinary calls for advanced research accreditation and two specific ones within the framework of an agreement with the University of Navarra.

315 applications for advanced research accreditation were received in 2021, 25% more than in the previous year

In 2021, the number of applications submitted in the calls for research accreditation and advanced research accreditation increased by 29.6% compared to the previous year.

### 3.2. Accreditation of merits in research, teaching and management

Salary bonuses for public service and contract teaching and research staff at public universities in Catalonia are based on the assessment of individual merits in teaching, research and management

In the assessment of merits in teaching and in management, AQU Catalunya certifies that institutions have applied the corresponding assessment procedure in accordance with the regulations; and, with regard to six-year research quality premiums, in the case of regular (public service) staff it officially recognises previous assessments and in the case of contract staff carries out assessment.

#### Merits in research

AQU Catalunya directly assesses the individual merits in research of contract teaching and research staff on the basis of an established procedure and criteria and it has an agreement with the Spanish Research Assessment Commission (CNEAI) whereby it recognises the Commission's assessments of research work by regular (public service) staff who apply for this through the CNEAI.

During 2021, work was done to simplify the processing of assessment procedures, differentiating between assessment and recognition procedures by using multi-device HTML forms that modernise the process.

Applicants were able to automatically fill in the contributions to be evaluated through a web form that allows them to be uploaded if they are available on the Research Portal of Catalonia. This service makes it possible to validate the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), the category and the rank of those contributions present in the journals indexed in the Clarivate Analytics Journal Citation Reports. This facilitates the submittal of applications by applicants and the assessment by the commissions. A total of 2,000 people have used the service since it was launched, including 494 in 2021.

As for **civil servant teaching and research staff**, two calls for the recognition of research merits were opened in 2021 – one ordinary and one extraordinary – for which 460 applications were submitted, a figure that represents a decrease of 46% compared to the previous year. The extraordinary call targeted civil servant teaching and research staff who were unable to take part in the ordinary 2020 call for research merit assessment or in the pilot project for the assessment of knowledge transfer and innovation.

With regard to the ordinary call for the assessment of research premiums, in 2021 AQU Catalunya recognised 297 premiums and 15 were favourably assessed.

With regard to the extraordinary call for the recognition of the transfer and innovation premium, AQU Catalunya recognised 122 premiums.

## Evaluation and award of research premiums by agreement

AQU Catalunya has signed various agreements to assess the research activity of teaching and/or research staff at private Catalan universities and of research staff at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the following affiliated centres:

**Table 9. Affiliated institutions with agreements dealing with the evaluation and assessment of staff research premiums**

University	School/institution
UB	EISJD - Escola d'Infermeria de Sant Joan de Déu
UB i UdL	INEFC - Institut Nacional d'Educació Física de Catalunya
UAB	EUSS - Escola Universitària Salesians de Sarrià FHSCSP – Fundació Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau
UPF	Barcelona School of Management ESIM - Escola Superior d'Infermeria del Mar Fundació TecnoCampus Mataró-Maresme IBEI - Fundació Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals*
UdG	ERAM - Escola Universitària ERAM
	EU Mediterrani - Escola Universitària Mediterrani
	EUSES - Escola Universitària de la Salut i l'Esport
UVic-UCC	BAU - Centre Universitari de Disseny de Barcelona ESERP - Escuela Superior de Ciencias Empresariales, Marketing i Relaciones Públicas

The criteria and procedures are the same as those used to assess and evaluate research by regular and contract teaching and research staff at public universities in Catalonia.

Table 10. Institutions that AQU has agreements with concerning evaluation for staff research premiums. 2021 Results <sup>5</sup>

Institution	T	NA	P	RP	TF	TD	% F
Private universities in Catalonia	199	9	-	6	169	21	88.9%
Affiliated/partner institutions	42	2	-	2	26	10	65%
Research staff at UPC	8	4	-	-	4	-	100%
Research staff at UAB	3	3	-	-	-	-	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>85%</b>

## Certification of merits in teaching

For the assessment of the teaching activity of teaching and research staff, Catalan universities apply the relevant AQU Catalunya-accredited teaching assessment handbooks in force. The Catalan universities send the Agency the evaluation reports on the teaching activity of teaching and research staff certified by the specific Committee for the Evaluation of Teaching and Management Activity in accordance with the Teaching Evaluation Handbooks.

In 2021, the following have been certified:

Table 11. Results of the 2020 call for the certification of merits in teaching

Potential no. applicants <sup>6</sup>	Total no. applicants	Percentage applications	Positive	Unfavourable	Positive/ applications %	Positive/ potential %
<b>2,269</b>	1,359	59.9%	1,273	46	93.7%	56.1%

<sup>5</sup> T: applications received; NA: applications not assessed; P: pending; RP: appeals pending; TF: total positive; TD: total withheld; % F: % positive of the total.

<sup>6</sup> The number of potential applicants includes teachers from previous calls with the option to participate in the 2020 call.

## Certificates of assessment of teaching activity (CAAD)

The certification/assessment of teaching activity is aimed at teaching staff with research and/or advanced research accreditation issued by AQU Catalunya <sup>7</sup>.

The certificate of teaching activity recognises that the applicant’s teaching activity satisfies pre-established teaching requirements and can be considered by universities in their selection processes.

In 2021, 25 applications have been received, 19 of which were positive.

The following table shows the teaching evaluation certificates obtained during the period 2016-2021.

Table 12. Teaching assessment certificates (2016-2021)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Favourable	4	1	1	1	50	19
Non-assessable	1	-	-	-	-	6
Total applications	5	1	1	1	50	25

## Merit-based assessment of skills in management

Universities in Catalonia assess the individual merits of both regular and contract teaching staff as regards their skills in management according to instructions endorsed by AQU Catalunya and the Directorate General for Universities for this procedure. Following the institution’s assessment of teaching staff, the assessment reports are sent to the Agency, which certifies that assessment has taken place according to the guidelines.

In 2021 AQU Catalunya certified the assessment of the following 2020 premiums:

Table 13. Results of the 2020 call for the certification of skills in management <sup>8</sup>

6-year periods assessed	Positive	Withheld	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period
288	286	2	104	80	54	48

<sup>7</sup> Resolution UNI/1239/2004 of 26 April 2004 and Resolution UNI/3130/2005 of 28 October 2005.

<sup>8</sup> The information in the table refers to 6-year periods of externally assessed skills in management, not the number of people.

## 4. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER

### 4.1. Surveys and indicators of the higher education system in Catalonia

#### Employment outcomes of university graduates of higher arts education

AQU Catalunya coordinates an on-going survey study of graduate employment outcomes in Catalonia that has been carried out once every three years since 2000. All public universities (through their social councils), private universities, affiliated institutions and institutions delivering Arts higher education programmes now participate in the survey study, which provides data and benchmarks on the quality of graduate employment outcomes in Catalonia.



During 2021, the Agency continued with the analysis and dissemination of the data obtained in the seventh edition of the study. Specifically, analyses were carried out for higher arts education graduates, both at bachelor's level and, for the first time, at master's level. The comparative reports between centres were also drafted and made available to the Ministry of Education and the management teams.

At the same time, the employment outcomes of women twenty years after finishing university were analysed. For this task, we were advised by a working group made up of experts in the analysis of access to the labour market and gender inequalities. The results of the report were presented at an open online event on 9 July 2021.

The year 2021 also saw the start of preparations for the eighth edition of the employment outcomes study, which includes specifying the target population (more than 1,600 participating degrees), defining the expected sample and preparing agreements with the universities. One of the big changes in this new edition is the implementation of mixed fieldwork, with a combined online and telephone survey methodology. Due to the relevance of the study and the complexity of this transition, a working group of experts in survey methodology and management has assessed and advised us on the main challenges to be considered.

#### Employment outcomes of university graduates. Idescat population study

The Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT) and AQU Catalunya have been working to provide longitudinal monitoring of labour market outcomes based on administrative data.

In 2021, [IDESCAT](#) worked to implement the methodology studied since it began working with AQU Catalunya, with the aim of estimating employment rates and other indicators of interest for the years in which the survey on employment outcomes of public degree graduates is not carried out, as it is a triennial survey.

## Labour market integration from the point of view of employers

The “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, through the agreement it has signed with the Catalan Government, has worked with the Agency to carry out a study on graduate outcomes from the perspective of employers. This study, which complements the triennial survey of graduates of Catalan universities, aims to provide universities with information on employers’ perceptions of the skills and university training of graduates. The aim is to enable universities to develop policies to improve the university system in terms of academic offering and training programmes, and thus bring university education into closer alignment with the labour market.

The third edition of the project (2021-2023) started in 2021. In particular, work has already begun on the design and programming of the online survey<sup>9</sup>, the data collection and cleaning of the results. To this end, AQU Catalunya has received cooperation from **52 organisations (22 more than in the previous edition)**. The new features of this edition are related both to content and methodology; for example, two sectors of analysis have been incorporated (Education and Law) and a collection of good teaching practices oriented towards employability has been designed.

The following table contains the main indicators of the data collected in the first phase of the employer survey.

Table 14. Indicators of the first phase of the survey

Number of employers contacted	Total number of valid responses	Number of valid responses from graduate module	Number of valid responses from students on internships module	Response rate
<b>29,865</b>	1,729	1,420	1,451	5.7%

Likewise, during 2021, the results for the sectors pending publication within the second edition of the Employers project were released: [Teaching](#) and [Industrial Technologies](#).

---

<sup>9</sup> Fieldwork for the first phase of the employer survey was carried out in 2021, which excludes the Teaching and Health sectors. Data collection for these two sectors is scheduled for March 2022.

In addition, in the framework of REACU and with the collaboration of the quality agencies of the Basque Country, Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Castile and León, Aragon, Valencia and Galicia a series of national webinars has been launched to analyse the challenges of university education according as expressed by employers. Three virtual congresses have been organised: Early education, IT and Communication.

As a result of these webinars, a report has been drawn up that includes the main conclusions and the challenges for improving the associated degrees, so that all stakeholders can take them into account.

### Satisfaction survey of Bachelor's, Master's and Higher Arts Education graduates

The purpose of the satisfaction survey is to assess the level of satisfaction of graduates with the teaching and learning process, the services and facilities and their learning outcomes and achievements following on from their time at university. The purpose is to provide comparable indicators that facilitate the identification of strong points and areas for enhancement in degree programmes.

In 2021, the analysis of the results of the survey of graduates in the academic year 2019-2020 (satisfaction 2020) was completed, in which 15,100 graduates of bachelor's, master's and higher arts education programmes were surveyed. The project involved the 12 public and private universities in the Catalan system, 47 affiliated centres and 11 higher arts education centres.

As a result of this analysis, the triennial reports on the satisfaction of university bachelor's and master's degree graduates have been published, which include the results of more than 40,000 people surveyed who completed their studies in Catalonia between 2018 and 2020. A new feature of this latest report is that it includes the results of the satisfaction surveys for master's-level degree courses. The reports show that the training received in education in Catalonia was given an overall high rating: 7.2 for bachelor's degrees and 7.0 for master's degrees.

In addition, the data from the 2020 degree satisfaction survey have been published on the [EUC Dades](#) portal, where the aggregated results of the last three graduate cohorts surveyed can be consulted, with a sampling error equal to or less than 15%. In this regard, the indicators for bachelor's and master's degrees have also been updated in the degree files in [EUC Estudis](#).

Furthermore, during December 2021 and January 2022, fieldwork began on the seventh edition of the satisfaction survey for bachelor's degrees and the fifth edition of the satisfaction survey for master's degrees at all universities in Catalonia, both public and private, as well as the third edition of the survey for higher arts education centres.



## Via Universitària survey

Via Universitària is a project based on the Eurostudent survey, the purpose of which is to better understand the profile of university students and their quality of life in order to establish policies that best serve their needs and interests. The key factor in the project is equity, which means ensuring that all students can access and benefit from the educational experience regardless of social origin, age, gender, etc.

Xarxa Vives d'Universitats is the promoter of this programme, which, for the third time, comes under the technical direction of AQU Catalunya and is supported by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra, the Valencian Assessment and Forecasting Agency, and the University Quality Agency of the Balearic Islands.

Between February and March 2021 AQU Catalunya coordinated the fieldwork for this third edition of the survey, in which almost 50,000 responses were collected (14% of the university population), and the results showed an improvement compared to the previous edition. Following the cleaning, processing and preparation of the resulting data and descriptive products, the process of analysing the results has begun, in which six different research groups from around Catalonia are participating. The year ended by reviewing the analytical work carried out to date and planning the dissemination and impact strategy to be implemented during 2022.

Table 15. Results of field work by Via Universitària (2020-2022)

	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sampling error
Bachelor's	303,215	43,046	14.2%	0.4%
University masters	55,043	6,245	11.3%	1.2%
Total	358,258	49,291	13.8%	0.4%

## Indicators of the Catalan university system

AQU Catalunya is aware of the importance of having indicators to help in decision-making, both for improving degree programme assessment processes and for analysing specific areas of the Catalan university system. To this end, the Agency, in collaboration with the Ministry of Research and Universities, provides universities with the indicators required for the processes of monitoring and accrediting official university degrees.

During 2021, AQU Catalunya continued to update the data system and the different tools that make it possible to use this repository of assessment indicators.

In addition, two indicators for users were added: the graduation rate in  $t$  and  $t+1$  (key indicator for the university bachelor's and master's degree accreditation process) and the number of theses

supervised by teaching staff from the same university (key indicator for the doctorate accreditation process).

## 4.2. Studies and reports

### Employment outcomes report for higher arts education graduates

The [report with the main results](#) regarding the employment outcomes of graduates of higher arts education degrees has been published. Based on the data collected in the seventh edition of the employment outcomes study, this report is the first in this educational field in which we can find comparable data that shows the evolution of outcomes. The results were presented to the Catalan Ministry of Education and made available to the management teams of the various arts schools.

### Report on women's employment outcomes twenty years after finishing university

[This document](#) joins the Agency's two previous studies to analyse the impact of gender three years after graduation (published in 2010) and ten years later (published in 2012). AQU Catalunya's commitment to the gender perspective is clear and transversal in all its processes, of which the employment outcomes study is a key element. The aim of these studies is essentially to identify whether the employment outcomes of university graduates show significant differences between men and women, and how these differences evolve over time, taking into account the key fact of motherhood at that time, twenty years after graduation. The study was advised by a group of experts in the analysis of labour market insertion and gender inequalities.

### Three-yearly satisfaction reports of bachelor's and master's degree graduates

Reports have been published with the main satisfaction results of bachelor's and master's degree graduates in the Catalan higher education system:

- > [Satisfaction of graduates of Catalan universities](#)
- > [Access to the labour market for graduates of Master's degrees from Catalan universities Catalonia](#)

These reports aggregate the studies of the last three years and refer to people who graduated in the academic years 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

## Design cross-sectional assessment report

In 2021 AQU Catalunya published the two cross-sectional assessment reports corresponding to Design studies in the Catalan university system:

- > [\*Design cross-sectional report. Analysis of assessment results\*](#)
- > [\*Design cross-sectional report. Main indicators\*](#)

Both documents aim to provide a snapshot of the state of university education in Catalonia for design degrees, in order to contribute to their improvement. The reports include data on the context of design degrees, access to and enrolment on these courses, teaching staff, performance, employment outcomes and student satisfaction, as well as information on the accreditation results of these university courses.

## Reports on graduate outcomes from the perspective of employers

In 2021, within the framework of the Employers project, two reports were drawn up on the opinion of this group regarding the training of graduates in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Secondary Teacher Training, and in Industrial Technologies:

- > [\*Schools' opinion on the training of new teaching staff\*](#)
- > [\*The opinion of employers regarding the education received by Industrial Technology graduates\*](#)

## COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY



### 5. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER

#### 5.1. Knowledge transfer

EUC web portal (Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya)

##### *EUC Studies*

EUC Studies disseminates the results of the quality assessment processes of official Catalan university degree, master's and doctoral programmes. The website includes the quality labels of the degrees and also the labels of the centres that have obtained institutional accreditation.



The website includes the quality labels of the degrees and also the labels of the centres that have obtained institutional accreditation.

During 2021, search pages by degree level (bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees) have been added, with the aim of guiding prospective students in their choice of degrees and improving the portal's search engine optimisation. In addition, work has been carried out on the development of accessibility improvements to achieve compliance with European directives.

Over the course of the year, the portal received 60,243 visits from 46,596 users who viewed a total of 268,671 pages. These indicators reflect the effects of the work to update the portal, with

an increase of more than 160% in terms of visits and users and 220% in the number of pages visited, a strong increase over the same period last year.

### ***EUC Informes***

The [EUC Informes](#) (QA documentation) web portal is the repository of all reports from the different QA reviews by the Agency of degree programmes delivered at universities in Catalonia and Arts higher education programmes that come under the Department of Education, as well as the reports from all institutional reviews carried out by the Agency. The reports can be accessed through the new EUC portal.

In 2020 the portal held 6,900 reports, which was an increase of 12% compared to 2020, and received 4,357 visits by 3,013 users who visited a total of 17,350 pages.

### ***EUC Dades***

[EUC Dades](#) is a search engine of the data sources and outcomes of surveys carried out by the Agency up until the present time of graduate employment outcomes (graduate destinations) and the satisfaction of the recent graduate population with their degree studies. Indicators can be consulted according to course or subject. During 2021, the results of the Satisfaction Survey of bachelor's degree graduates have been incorporated.

The EUC Dades portal received 7,252 visits during the year, 39% more than the previous year, by 5,017 users who visited a total of 34,861 pages.

### ***Catalan Talent Observatory***

AQU Catalunya, together with the "la Caixa" Foundation, has opened the [Catalan Talent Observatory](#) portal, which analyses jobs offered online in Catalonia, to the public. In December it was presented at a webinar to which 365 people signed up.



AQU Catalunya, in conjunction with the "la Caixa" Foundation, has responded to this challenge by creating the Catalan Talent Observatory, an innovative web portal that uses the latest advances in web scraping and natural language processing technologies to analyse job offers recently published online in Catalonia (through SOC - Feina Activa, JobTalent, InfoJobs, Infoempleo, Adecco, Hays, Manpower, Randstad, Monster, Indeed, Jobbydoo, etc.). For example, in the fourth quarter of 2021, the portal analyzed more than 800,000 job offers. This portal provides an interactive visualisation of the jobs and skills most in demand in Catalonia, along with other characteristics such as the type of contract, and puts

Catalonia on a par with other European countries where similar initiatives have been carried out. The Observatory is not a job search engine, but rather a portal for analysing job offers in an aggregate way in order to have an overview of labour market trends.

### Conferences

The conferences organised by AQU Catalunya, which are mainly aimed at the Catalan university community and the Catalan administration, are places where people can exchange knowledge with the aim of promoting and deepening the culture of quality and continuous improvement in the Catalan university system.

In 2021, the Agency organised seven webinars and celebrated the 25th anniversary of the creation of AQU Catalunya at a face-to-face commemorative event. It also participated in the organisation of three other conferences. These webinars and conferences were as follows:

#### ***Challenges in university training in Early Childhood and Primary Education***

Webinar –24 February 2021

AQU Catalunya has organised this webinar together with the external assessment agencies of Andalusia, Aragon, Castille and Leon, the Canary Islands and the Basque Country.

The webinar aimed to:

- > Offer a general updated view of the main challenges of university training in Early Childhood and Primary Education from the perspective of the employer group.
- > Present the opinion of the employer group on the suitability of university training in Education based on a case study carried out in Catalonia.
- > Debate on what should be the specific areas for improvement of university training in Early Childhood and Primary Education. To fuel the debate, the agencies will show the overall results of the assessments of these degrees.

518 people signed up for the seminar.

### **European Approach: challenges and opportunities for Catalan universities**

Webinar – 12 March 2021

The aim of the webinar was to present the European Approach joint programme assessment procedure and to share the experiences of application in Catalonia.

El objetivo de este seminario ha sido es presentar el European Approach a las universidades catalanas y las experiencias donde ya se ha aplicado en Cataluña.



During the webinar, the challenges of this approach were shown from the point of view of external assessment and the difficulties and opportunities arising from the experiences of Catalan universities that have recently assessed programmes following this methodology.

435 people signed up for the seminar.

### **Challenges in university training in Computer Science and Telecommunications**

Webinar – 12 May 2021

AQU Catalunya has organised this webinar together with the external assessment agencies of Andalusia, Aragon, Castille and Leon, the Canary Islands and the Basque Country.

The webinar aimed to:

- > Offer a general updated view of the main challenges of university training in Computer Science and Telecommunications from the perspective of the employer group.
- > Present the opinion of the employer group on the suitability of university training in Computer Science and Telecommunications based on a case study carried out in Catalonia.
- > Discuss what the specific areas should be for improvement of university training in Computer Science and Telecommunications, for which the agencies will show overall results of the assessment of these programmes.

407 people signed up for the seminar.

### **Reflecting on the future of European Quality Assurance**

Webinar – 27 May 2021

AQU Catalunya has organised this webinar together with the external assessment agencies of Ireland, Norway and Portugal and aims at analysing the differences in ENQA and EQAR interpretation of the ESG.

In the first part of the seminar the results of a detailed analysis of all decisions of ENQA and EQAR under ESG2015 have been presented; In the second part of the seminar a discussion paper has been presented including observations on the consequences of changes taking place, an appreciation of the added-value of successive ENQA compliance reviews and proposals for future developments.

208 people signed up for the seminar.

### **Short learning programmes (Micro-credentials): results of the first experience**

Webinar –16 June 2021

This session was specially designed for degree programme managers who are considering short learning programmes (SLP) as an option. The aim was to give an overview of these programmes in the European Union, to explain the experience gained in Catalonia and to discuss the opportunities and difficulties that their implementation could create for the Catalan university system.

217 people signed up for the seminar.

### **Challenges in university training in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication**

Webinar – 17 June 2021

AQU Catalunya has organised this webinar together with the external assessment agencies of Andalusia, Aragon, Castille and Leon, the Canary Islands, Galicia and the Basque Country.

The webinar aimed to:

- > Offer a general updated view of the main challenges of university training in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication from the perspective of the employer group.
- > Present the opinion of the employer group on the suitability of university training in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication based on a case study carried out in Catalonia.
- > Discuss what the specific areas should be for improvement of university training in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication, for which the agencies will show overall results of the assessment of these programmes.

201 people signed up for the seminar.

### **The AUDIT programme. Design of internal quality assurance systems for university education**

Webinar – 18 June 2021

The webinar was especially aimed at heads of affiliated and higher arts education centres, who must design or adapt an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) for implementation and future assessment and certification.

318 people signed up for the seminar.

### ***Gender differences in employment 20 years after graduation***

Webinar – 9 July 2021

This session has presented the conclusions of the results obtained in this study which analyses gender differences in employment 20 years after obtaining a university degree. This is a pioneering study because the same group has been studied in 2005 and 2020 and, therefore, it will show how the gender factor impacts employment and the quality of employment by gender.



261 people signed up for the seminar.

### ***What have we learned from internal quality assurance system (IQAS) certification processes?***

Webinar – 29 September 2021

The webinar served to analyse the functioning of the IQAS process, its strengths and areas of improvement, and to share the lessons learned from the different perspectives.

The webinar also presented best practices from other higher education systems, and featured their explanations.

418 people signed up for the seminar.

### ***AQU Catalunya's 25th anniversary***

Palau de Pedralbes – 27 October 2021

The aim of the event was to mark AQU Catalunya's 25th anniversary.

140 people attended the event.

### *The implementation of institutional accreditation in universities*

Webinar – 1 December 2021

The webinar has presented the state of institutional accreditation in Catalonia and the methodology to be employed for institutionally accredited centres.

511 people signed up for the seminar.



### *Presentation of the Catalan Talent Observatory*

Webinar – 15 December 2021

The aim of the webinar was to present the Catalan Talent Observatory. The Observatory offers, in a concise and comprehensible way, a description of a major part of the job offers in Catalonia, including, for example, the occupations most in demand, the skills and the competencies required, along with other characteristics such as the type of contract and experience required.

207 people signed up for the seminar.

## Publications

AQU Catalunya published a total of 67 publications, 25 of which were original publications

Of these, it is worth highlighting the publication of project results reports:

- > Graduate outcomes as seen from the perspective of employers for Teaching and Industrial Technologies graduates.
- > The employment outcome survey from the perspective of arts bachelor's and master's degree graduates in higher arts education and the gender analysis *Employment outcomes of women twenty years after finishing university*.
- > The analysis of the satisfaction study of bachelor's and master's degree graduates.

Two cross-sectoral assessment reports of Design studies were also published.

In the area of methodology, the revised version of the guides for accreditation and verification of bachelor's and master's degrees, and institutional accreditation and assessment of the design of the IQA system for higher arts education have been published.

The *Protocol for the prevention and handling of sexual and gender-based harassment in AQU Catalunya* was also published.

The AQU Catalunya Action Plan for 2021 and the AQU Catalunya Activities and Corporate Social Responsibility Annual Report 2020 were also published.

Of these publications, 26 were published in Catalan, 22 in Spanish and 19 in English.

## 5.2. Communication tools

AQU Catalunya has the following tools at its disposal to disseminate information on its activities: firstly, the AQU Catalunya corporate website and the specific websites EUC Studies, EUC Reports, EUC Data and WINDDAT; and secondly, the quarterly newsletter, the YouTube channel and a Twitter account. It also manages relations with the media.

### Website

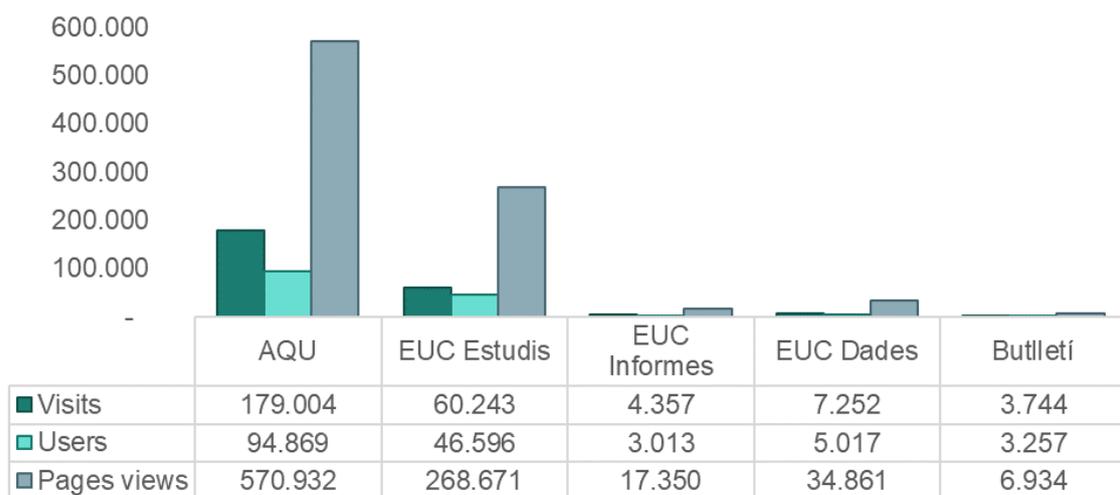
The AQU Catalunya corporate website is the main instrument for communicating the Agency’s activities.

During 2021, a thorough review and update of the content and structure of the main pages was carried out, with the aim of improving both the user experience and access to information. Work was also carried out on the analysis and development of accessibility improvements to achieve compliance with European directives.

The new website is available in three languages (Catalan, Spanish and English) and it has a responsive design, i.e. it adapts to different mobile devices.

The number of visits, users and page views for the corporate website and its subsites were as follows:

Figure 6. Number of visits, users and page views on AQU Catalunya websites (2021)



## Online newsletter (elButlletí)

The four issues for the year (numbers 100 to 103) of AQU's e-newsletter (*elButlletí*) were published and sent to 15,100 subscribers, which was an increase of 14% over the previous year's number of subscriptions.

In January 2021 the 100th issue of the newsletter was sent out, with a new, modern and elegant design which is aligned with the image of the corporate website. In addition, the new newsletter has a responsive design which adapts to different devices.

## Twitter

By the end of 2021 the AQU Catalunya Twitter account had 2,492 followers, which represented an 14.7% increase in the total number compared to 2020, and 588 tweets had been sent. In addition, there were 855 mentions of @aqucatalunya and approximately 30,600 profile visits, an exponential growth (more than 300%).



## YouTube

AQU Catalunya has a YouTube channel for the purpose of disseminating the activities it carries out and, where necessary, training experts. Since 2020, the channel has also been used to broadcast live webinars.

During 2021, the Agency published 12 videos on the YouTube channel. Mainly, the webinars organised.

This year, as a result of the need to disseminate the events in online format, the number of reproductions of AQU Catalunya videos on the YouTube channel has grown exponentially, by 46% compared to the previous year. As a result, in 2021 the videos on our YouTube channel received 11,510 views, with a cumulative total of 31,264 views.

The most viewed video was AQU Catalunya's [The AUDIT programme](#), broadcast live on 18 June, with 1,596 views. In second place was [The implementation of institutional accreditation in universities](#), broadcast live on 1 December, with 1,080 views, and in third place, the webinar [European Approach: challenges and opportunities for Catalan universities](#), also broadcast live on 12 March, with 802 views.

## LinkedIn

In 2021, AQU Catalunya opened an account on the social network LinkedIn, where so far the results of some of the Agency's studies and projects have been published.



The AQU Catalunya LinkedIn account has 352 followers and has had a total of 662 page views.

## Media

During 2021, 36 media citations were generated by AQU Catalunya, 16 more than the previous year.

# COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE



## 6. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

### 6.1. Strategic management

#### Strategic Plan 2019-2022

AQU Catalunya's [Strategic Plan for 2019-2022](#), which was endorsed by the Governing Board in 2019, sets out the Agency's mission, vision, the values underpinning its new Code of Ethics, and its strategic priorities and action steps.

The strategic priorities and action steps set by the Governing Board for the four-year period from 2019-2022 are as follows:

- > Implement measures with innovative features that impact higher education and the university system in Catalonia.
- > Facilitate open access to quantitative and qualitative data for quality assurance and enhancement in the higher education system in Catalonia.
- > Consolidate the international position of both AQU Catalunya and universities in Catalonia.
- > Encourage and enable staff and external experts to maintain and develop their expertise and thereby enhance their commitment to working with the Agency and their ability to embrace change.
- > Maintain sufficient funding, human resources and office and workspace in order to meet the requirements of all planned activities.



In 2020, 57% of the actions envisaged in the Plan were implemented, 11 percentage points more than the previous year.

### Assessment according to European Criteria and Guidelines

Every five years, if quality assurance agencies operating in Europe want their decisions to be recognised by the other European countries, they must pass an external evaluation that validates compliance with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (2015) in the assessment processes they carry out.

In 2021, work continued to address the recommendations for improvement from the 2017 evaluation.

Furthermore, in 2021 AQU Catalunya initiated the process of being assessed for ESG compliance for the fourth time. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) have accepted AQU Catalunya's application to carry out the international external assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) for targeted reviews, thus becoming the first agency to test this type of review.

The process began with the creation of the Internal Assessment Committee, which was responsible for validating the self-assessment structure and report, which included the opinions of AQU Catalunya's different stakeholders.

The self-report was approved by the Standing Committee of the AQU Catalunya Governing Board, and in December 2021 it was submitted to ENQA to continue the assessment process.

### Corporate image

To coincide with the celebration of AQU Catalunya's 25th anniversary, the Agency has revamped its corporate image, updating the logo, which has retained the essence of the previous design in the form of the initials "AQU Catalunya" and the two corporate colours (blue and green).

During 2021, the Agency's communication tools and publications were adapted to the new graphic image.

## 6.2. Governing, QA and advisory bodies

AQU Catalunya reaches its agreements through its corresponding governing and quality assurance bodies: the Governing Board and Standing Committee, the Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP), the Research Assessment Commission (CAR), and the Appeals Committee. The

Agency also took into account the opinions of its advisory bodies, including the Advisory Committee, the Committee of Vice-rectors responsible for academic governance and quality, the University Councils and the representatives of private universities Committee, the University QA Units Committee, the Technical Committee for Surveys and the Student Advisory Committee.

As for the Appeals Committee, the appeals related to the university teaching staff assessment processes were resolved in 2021. As of 25 January 2022, a total of 182 have been submitted. With regard to the process of submitting supporting arguments regarding university degrees, one supporting argument was received in 2020 for the issuance of a review report in the Verification process.

En cuanto a la Comisión de Apelaciones, durante 2021 se han resuelto los recursos de alzada relacionados con los procesos de evaluación del profesorado universitario. Se han presentado un total de 182. En cuanto a los procesos de alegaciones sobre las titulaciones universitarias, durante 2021 se ha recibido una alegación para emitir el informe de revisión en el proceso de verificación.

### 6.3. Expert assessment staff

The experts who participate in AQU Catalunya's assessment processes are both individuals of recognised prestige in the academic and/or professional spheres and students, taking into account the criteria of independence, objectivity and absence of conflict of interest. In addition, they must meet the requirements of ability and merit previously established by the assessment committees.

In 2021, AQU Catalunya's pool of experts received 328 new CVs.

This year, 854 experts<sup>10</sup> took part in AQU Catalunya's activities, of whom 503 took part in the institutional and degree programme assessment processes and 376 in the faculty assessment processes. The gender distribution was 56% men and 44% women. It is worth noting the Agency's commitment to gender parity in the assessment committees, as well as to increasing the total number of women appointed as committee chairs.

---

<sup>10</sup> An expert can participate in both types of assessment.

Figure 7. Experts by academic post (2021)

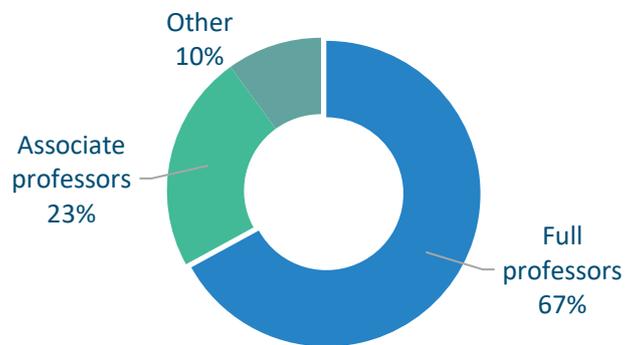
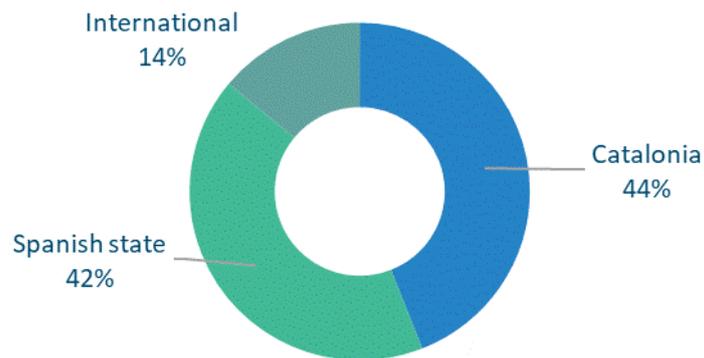


Figure 8. Experts by origin (2021)



As far as training is concerned, during 2021 all new experts received specific face-to-face or virtual training prior to their participation in the assessment processes.

## 7. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

AQU Catalunya has carried out its **accountability process** and has been transparent with the actions carried out. It has also been very active in the **legal field**, drawing up the agreements, reports, resolutions and edicts necessary for the smooth running of the Agency's activities and taking part in the relevant administrative procurement procedures.

AQU Catalunya's **information quality and security management system**, also remained active. The external certification audit carried out by AENOR, in accordance with ISO 9001: 2015 and ISO 27001: 2013 standards, was passed satisfactorily.

In the field of **information and communication technologies**, the activities implemented included the following: progress was made in the development of Talassa, a unified system for the management of the Quality Assessment Area's assessment files; the current procedures for premiums were separated into the assessment procedure and the procedure for the recognition of the research activity of university teaching staff; improvements were made to both the EUC Estudis platform and the internal Venus platform; the internal quality indicator management module was developed further; continuous improvements and extensions were made to the functionalities of the different modules of NEXUS and the AQU Catalunya extranet; a tool for monitoring projects and tasks was implemented; the controls specified in ISO 27002 on information security were complied with; the necessary acquisitions and upgrades were made to keep the technological infrastructures fully up to date, secure and dimensioned; a new UPS was installed for AQU Catalunya's DPC; support was provided to AQU Catalunya users by resolving the 896 requests made in the computer applications and systems mailboxes.

In the field of **economic and accounting management**, the 2020 budgets were carried over. It is worth noting that the financial year ended with a balanced budget, specifically with a budget out-turn of €8,642.89. This balance has been achieved due to the reduction in expenditure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as both institutional and faculty assessment processes have moved from a face-to-face to a virtual format. Work was begun to implement the CAPTIO project for the settlement of expenses, and the Agency took part in the pilot project for the integration of the GEEC administrative contracting tool and the PANGEA accounting application.

The Agency has periodically submitted its accounts to the Directorate-General for Financial Policy, the Comptroller General, the Directorate-General for Universities and the General Secretariat of the Department of Economy and Knowledge, as well as to the Public Audit Office (Sindicatura de Comptes).

Finally, as regards the AQU Catalunya **registry**, an official Government registry, it registered 102 records in-person in 2021, 58.4% less than the previous year.

## COMMITMENT TO ALLIANCES



### 8. ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL AGENTS IN CATALONIA

Within the system of higher education in Catalonia, the Agency maintained relations mainly with:

- > the Secretariat for Universities and Research, with which it participated in the preparation of the National Pact for the Information Society;
- > with the Inter-university Council of Catalonia, where it participated in the Committee for Academic Programming and Governance, the Academic Staff Committee, the Women and Science Committee and the General Conference; and the working group for the 2030 Agenda.
- > with the universities and other higher education institutions in Catalonia, dealing with matters as requested.
- > Different networks such as CIDUI, GUNI, CSUC or the Vives network.
- > The Catalan universities' student councils.

It also maintained relations with different bodies in different departments of the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya):

- > The Department of Education, for the management of the assessment and quality of arts higher education.
- > with the Professional Training Council of Catalonia (*Consell Català de Formació Professional*), to take part in the Internal Planning and Forward Studies working group.
- > with the Department of the Presidency's Directorate General for Analytical and Forward Studies.

- > The Directorate-General for the Civil Service, for the cataloguing of university degrees that may be open to public calls for applications.
- > The Institut Català de les Dones (the Catalan institute that designs, promotes and coordinates policy concerning women in society) and the Inter-university Council of Catalonia, in the third survey carried out from a gender perspective on the differences in the quality of employment outcomes between male and female graduates twenty years after graduation.
- > Idescat (the Statistical Institute of Catalonia).

It also maintained relations with social agents to promote the Employers project, and with Barcelona City Council to support it in the guidance sessions it organises, with different professional colleges and associations and specifically, with the Col·legi d'Enginyers Industrials de Catalunya and the Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros Industriales de Madrid, and with secondary schools to present the quality of qualifications in Catalonia.

## 9. INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

AQU Catalunya continued participating in REACU, the national body that coordinates the network of higher education QA agencies in Spain, and maintained its relations with other higher education QA agencies in Spain. An agreement was signed in 2021 with the University of Navarra to undertake teaching staff assessment and accreditation procedures

## 10. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

### 10.1. International institutional relations

The main organisations that AQU Catalunya maintained relations with in 2021 were as follows:

#### INQAAHE



The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is an international association with over 300 organisations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education, the majority of them QA agencies.

AQU Catalunya has been a member of INQAAHE since 1998 until 2022. During 2021, the Agency actively collaborated on the process of establishing INQAAHE's permanent headquarters in the city of Barcelona and in the transition to a permanent secretariat.

In addition, together with the University of Barcelona, AQU Catalunya organised the celebration of INQAAHE's 30th anniversary and the official opening of its international headquarters in Barcelona. The event took place on 7 and 8 October in a hybrid format (in-person and virtual) under the title "30 Years of Spreading the Culture of Quality Globally: Celebrating 30 Years of Remarkable Global Achievement".

AQU Catalunya is a member of the Board of Directors of INQAAHE through Anna Prades, who has been appointed treasurer for a period of three years. The Board is the body in charge of managing the general affairs of the network, mainly related to the admission of members and the budget and financing of the entity.

#### ENQA



AQU Catalunya has been a full member of the [European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#) (ENQA) since the association was founded in 2000.

The Agency took part in the two general assemblies held in 2021, during which the format of the targeted reviews for external quality assurance agencies that have already carried out two cycles of external review was discussed, among other issues. In addition, AQU Catalunya is a member of the Micro-credentials Group (2021-2022).

On 4 October, Dr Esther Huertas was appointed as a member of the ENQA Agency Review Committee. Since 2020, Núria Comet has been a member of the ENQA Appeals and Complaints Committee.

### EQAR



The [European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education](#) (EQAR) is a register of QA agencies that have demonstrated substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. AQU Catalunya has been registered with EQAR since 5 December 2008 and was one of the first three QA agencies to be listed on the register.

The Agency has collaborated with EQAR to develop and consolidate the [Database of External Quality Assurance Results \(DEQAR\)](#), which is a repository of quality assurance reports from all EQAR registered agencies. During 2021, AQU Catalunya kept the typology of the external assessment reports automatically uploaded so far up to date, and is working to complete the uploading of the rest of the reports.

## 10.2. International projects, reviews and exchange

### *Skills4Employability (2019-2021)*

#### Skills4Employability – Enhancing the presence of soft skills in Higher Education curricula

The Skills4Employability project is an Erasmus+ project led by CONEXX (Belgium), in which AQU Catalunya, the Sapienza University (Rome, Italy), the Politehnica University (Bucharest, Romania) and the Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) all participate as partners.

The aim of the project is to help universities enhance the quality of higher education through the introduction of soft skills in curricula and assess the degree to which these match the skills relevant to employers' needs in the labour market.

During 2021 Intellectual Output 2 (IO2) was completed, resulting in the *Soft Skills Assessment Guidelines* for the assessment of soft skills. The methodology is available on the [project website](#).

On 19 October 2021, the results presentation session took place in virtual format in light of COVID-19.

### ***Structured indicators to manage HEI Quality System (SMART-QUAL) (ongoing, started in 2020)***

In 2021, work continued to develop the Structured indicators to manage HEI Quality System ([SMART-QUAL](#)) project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme [Key Action 2] and coordinated by CONEXX-EU (Belgium), in which AQU Catalunya participates together with eight other partners.

This year, the Quality Indicators Scoreboard, a tool that aims to become a reference framework for developing and harmonising internal quality assurance systems at international level, was agreed on and published. It is based on the analysis of which indicators are the most common and relevant in terms of 36 higher education institutions in five different countries and 39 bibliographic resources specialised in the subject.

Universities and quality agencies from up to five different European countries are involved in this project:

- > The Belgium-based international cooperation body [CONEXX-EU](#), as the coordinating entity.
- > Quality agencies: SKVC, [Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education](#) (Lithuania) and A3ES, [Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior](#) (Portugal).
- > Universities: [Universidade do Minho](#) and [Universidade de Aveiro](#) (Portugal), [Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#) (Belgium), [Politecnico di Torino](#) (Italia), and UIC – [Universitat Internacional de Catalunya](#) (Spain).

### ***CHARM-EU (in progress, started in 2019)***

[Challenge-driven, Accessible, Research-based, Mobile European University](#)

On 26 June 2019 the European Commission announced that the CHARM-EU project (Challenge-driven, Accessible, Research-based, Mobile European University) was one of several chosen to form part of the 'European Universities' initiative

The University of Barcelona/UB is the institution leading the project in an alliance consisting of the Loránd Eötvös University (Budapest), Trinity College Dublin, the University of Montpellier and Utrecht University. AQU Catalunya is an associate member of the project.

The project proposes an innovative pedagogical approach that consists of a series of learning modules (regarded as credit packs) for a group of between 100 and 200 students from the five participating universities to receive an interdisciplinary, challenge-based education consisting of multidisciplinary credits.

The objective is to change academic provision through a more cross-disciplinary approach that offers a multi-disciplinary learning experience to students. The cross-curricula nature of academic provision will be highly flexible and allow students to personalise their education.

### ***Employability in Programme Development (EPD) (on-going, starting in 2020)***

The project Employability in Programme Development (EPD) aims to establish mechanisms to inform the design and development of training programmes and improve the employability of graduates. The final interest group in the project is the teaching staff, as the aim is to incorporate employability through changes in teaching practice. To inform academics, there will be intermediate units to help the academic community (employment services, quality units, employment science institutes, etc.).

The following partners are involved in this project: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the University of Reading, the University of Glasgow and AQU Catalunya.

In 2021, the partners of the EPD project worked on the development of theoretical perspectives related to employability (literature review), identifying relevant data sources and, on 9 and 10 November 2021, carrying out group activities (hackathons) with the actors involved in the projects in order to sketch out a prototype for the dashboard.

### ***Complex Trajectories (Complex) (on-going, started in 2020)***

The Complex Trajectories project aims to understand the increasingly diverse and complex trajectories of students at university, and to support those who follow them. In order to do this, the project will define a system for monitoring students' trajectories that will allow the development of both institutional and university support policies. In this respect, it is proposed that analysis of trajectories be based, not the programme (graduation rates, etc.), but on the student.

The project partners are: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universitat de València, Université de Bourgogne, The Open University, University of Alberta, Universidade do Porto and the Government of Catalonia's Secretariat for Universities and Research. AQU Catalunya is an associate partner.

During 2021, the Agency participated as an attendee in the seminar "[UNESCO project on Flexible Learning Pathways in UK Higher Education](#)".

## Exchange

AQU Catalunya has actively participated in meetings, forums and projects that are considered to add value to the Catalan university system as a whole and which enable it to learn and pass on

information on activities in the international sphere in order to keep abreast of developments in the field of quality. In particular, the Agency has presented 21 papers at international meetings.

Of these presentations, fifteen were part of international workshops, three were part of international projects in which AQU Catalunya collaborates, and three more were developed within the framework of working groups in which the Agency participates.

# COMMITMENT TO SAFE AND ETHICAL WORKING CONDITIONS



## 11. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

As of 31 December 2021, the **Agency's staff** consists of 54 people – 40 women and 14 men – including the Director.

With regard to **health and safety**, the relevant measures were carried out over the course of the year in the area of occupational risk prevention, particularly those required to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AQU Catalunya has drawn up an operating manual for the Agency's general services and has also commissioned a Self-protection, emergency and evacuation plan for the building it occupies.

Finally, the necessary actions were taken with regard to the health surveillance of the Agency's staff.

With regard to **remote working**, work was carried out in 2021 on the design of the AQU Catalunya's teleworking system. Furthermore, as a result of AQU Catalunya's participation in the 2nd edition of the Nust Network Mentoring Programme, the Agency was awarded a runner-up prize in the Barcelona Award for an Innovative Business in Organisation and Use of Time.

Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya

June 2022 · AQU-28-2022



**AQU CATALUNYA**

Web: [www.aqu.cat](http://www.aqu.cat) · Twitter: [@aqucatalunya](https://twitter.com/aqucatalunya)