

**SUMMARY OF THE  
AQU CATALUNYA  
ACTIVITIES AND  
CORPORATE SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY  
REPORT**

**2022**



**AQU CATALUNYA**





**AQU CATALUNYA**

# SUMMARY OF THE AQU CATALUNYA ACTIVITIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT

# 2022

BARCELONA, 2023



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# FOREWORD

The AQU CATALUNYA ACTIVITIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT 2022 aims to provide the university community, and society at large, with an account of the activities carried out by the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya) in 2022.

I must begin this foreword by mentioning a very significant development that took place within the Agency at the end of 2022: its change in president. Indeed, after nine years at the helm of AQU Catalunya, Dr Josep Joan Moreso's presidency came to an end. His time serving the Agency can only be described as excellent, and was characterised by his commitment to quality, his focus on key issues, and his constant dedication to finding answers and solutions to the many different issues that required them over the years. As president, he was instrumental in leading the Agency to where it is today. We all owe him a debt of gratitude. Dr Francesc Xavier Grau was chosen to take up the mantle, beginning a new chapter in 2023, one fraught with challenges as a result of numerous legislative changes and the increasing importance of new assessment trends.

In 2022 we were able to achieve a state of post-pandemic normality, especially from July onwards. This is reflected implicitly in many of the activities described in this report, but was particularly relevant for our degree programme and institution assessment activities, which we were once again able to carry out in person.

It is also worth noting that this year AQU Catalunya passed its international external review of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This is highly significant for a number of reasons, enabling the Agency to remain on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) – thus becoming one of the two longest-standing agencies on this register – and to maintain its status as a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Passing this review was a necessary condition for the Agency to be able to continue to carry out its degree programme and institution assessment activities fully and legally in Catalonia.

The Agency carried out many activities involving degree programme and institution quality assessment in 2022. What made this year stand out from the year before, however, is the work that needed to be done to adapt these activities to 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; and Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university studies and the procedure for quality assurance.

With regard to faculty, there is one key fact worth noting: we received twice as many applications for the assessment of research merits from non-civil servant teaching and research staff. In addition, following its signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), AQU Catalunya joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) to further contribute to the discussion on moving towards a new research assessment model. The Agency will

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be monitoring this matter closely, given the implications it may have for the methodologies used to assess teaching staff.

A significant development that is not covered in this report, but which I would like to mention because it will affect the Agency in the years to come, is the passing of Law 9/2022, of 21 December, on science. This regulation will require AQU Catalunya to implement a new assessment activity over the coming years, as it will need to issue credentials of excellence in research, development and innovation for departments, affiliated centres, standalone institutes and other university units.

This report covers a plethora of activities. In this foreword, I have only briefly touched on a few key matters concerning quality assessment and teaching staff. While the Agency's work does encompass a wide range of activities in these areas, it also focuses on internationalisation and knowledge management. Together, these form a broad framework of action affecting multiple aspects of the university system in Catalonia, the aim always being to make it better.

This report begins with an executive summary of the most significant actions carried out by the Agency in 2022, followed by a more detailed list of its activities, structured according to AQU Catalunya's five corporate social responsibility commitments and its strategic lines of action (Table 1).

**Table 1. Alignment of AQU Catalunya's corporate social responsibility commitments with its strategic lines of action**

<b>Corporate social responsibility commitments</b>	<b>Strategic lines of action</b>
Commitment to improving higher education	Institutional and programme quality Teaching staff quality Knowledge generation and transfer
Commitment to society	Knowledge generation and transfer
Commitment to good governance	Strategic management Internal organisation
Commitment to partnerships	Strategic management Internationalisation
Commitment to employees	Internal organisation

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The results presented in this report are the outcome of the work and good judgement of the Agency 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 (837 in 2022!). It is thanks to their dedication that we were able to carry out the enormous amount of work detailed in this report, and it is thanks to them that the Agency can continue to progress. Many thanks!

**Jaume Valls Pasola**  
**Director of AQU Catalunya**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AQU CATALUNYA ACTIVITIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT 2022, like the previous year's report, is structured around the corporate social responsibility commitments the Agency strives to uphold. Each of these commitments, in turn, is linked to one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The assessment results included in this report were taken on 31 January 2023.

The activities carried out by the Agency in 2022 are summarised below, by commitment and line of action.

**COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION.** This commitment encompasses all the actions that aim to improve the higher education system in Catalonia:



### > Institutional quality

- Key developments in 2022 included a review of our assessment methodologies to bring them into line with the provisions of royal decrees 822/2021 and 640/2021, and the return to in-person and hybrid (online/in-person) external visits. Internally, we implemented the degree programme and institution assessment file manager, which allows for greater control and monitoring of assessment files.
- As regards institutional assessment in 2022, we carried out 13 external preliminary visits and 13 visits for the certification of internal quality assurance systems, and the reports issued were favourable in all cases. We also issued nine favourable reports for the institutional accreditation of centres, thus ending the year with 37 institutionally accredited centres. We started the process of renewing the accreditation of the teaching assessment handbooks at Ramon Llull University (URL) and the International University of Catalonia (UIC). We also launched a process to validate the teaching assessment handbook of the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (Uvic-UCC) and another to monitor the teaching assessment handbook of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC).
- Regarding degree programme assessment, we continued to roll out the framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of official university degree programmes. We assessed a total of 430 degree programmes, 17% less than the year before (this drop is due to the impact of the royal decrees approved in 2021): 51 validations, 37 monitoring actions for degrees with conditions, 182

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modification requests (including modifications due to the increase of places on nursing degrees) and 160 degrees, which were externally reviewed on 89 visits, 26% less than in 2021. We issued 213 degree programme accreditation reports (116 in the 2021 call and 97 in the 2022 call), of which nearly 20% were accredited with a progressing towards excellence rating. We assessed eight short learning programmes linked to the automotive industry and sustainable mobility, all of which received a favourable assessment report, as well as eight programmes in the field of renewable energies, which are still awaiting a final decision.

- As for degree programme internationalisation, we integrated the accreditation processes of four degrees from universities seeking to obtain labels.
- In terms of methodology, we revised ten methodological documents and created the “Focus” collection of tools to support the quality assurance of degree programmes. We also began drafting the reference document *Adaptació a resultats d’aprenentatge de les competències professionals del Màster Universitari en Advocacia i Procura* [Adaptation to learning outcomes of the professional competencies of the Master’s Degree in Legal Practice].
- In relation to the processes for reviewing university degree programmes, the Appeals Commission received two appeals in 2022: one on the accreditation of cross-cutting issues affecting doctoral programmes and another on the accreditation qualification process. The Commission rejected the first and upheld the second.

### > Teaching staff quality

- In 2022, AQU Catalunya joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) to contribute to the discussion on moving towards a new research assessment model. We maintained the singular status of Nursing and Physiotherapy, and gave this status to Education as well. We also modified the assessment criteria for Nursing to give greater importance to professional merits. By means of an agreement, we launched a process to issue reports recognising the research activity (for periods of six years) of Ramon y Cajal and Beatriz Galindo researchers. Finally, we simplified the assessment process for research merits, leaving only two avenues: assessment and recognition.
- With regard to the issuing of accreditations prior to university teaching staff selection processes, we received 2,103 applications in 2022, 2.6% more than in 2021: 1,166 applications for reports for tenure-eligible lecturers, 637 applications for research accreditation and 300 applications for advanced research accreditation. We continued to issue reports for Serra Húnter Programme temporary teaching staff, which are designed for Catalan public university staff who have a contract as a tenure-eligible lecturer. A total of 27 applications were submitted under the Serra Húnter Programme.
- As for assessing merits, 594 applications were submitted in 2022 in the call for civil servant teaching and research staff, 29.1% more than the year before (514 for

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assessment and 80 for recognition). Non-civil servant teaching and research staff submitted 1,390 applications, twice as many as in 2021, and 45 applications for recognition. There were 231 research periods under agreement. AQU Catalunya certified the teaching merits for the 2021 call for applications (1,456) and received four applications for teaching merits. Finally, we certified 272 management periods.

- A total of 181 appeals were lodged against the decisions of the Research Assessment Commission, 20% of which were upheld by the Appeals Commission.
  
- > **Knowledge generation and transfer** In 2022, we launched the eighth employment outcomes survey for university graduates of higher arts education, which included a new mixed-methods approach whereby the survey was carried out both online and by telephone. The fieldwork was carried out by means of an online survey in 2022. We continued our fieldwork in the Education and Health sectors and made further efforts to use and disseminate the results of the study on employment outcomes from the perspective of employers (results were presented for Communication, Pharmacy, Economics and Business, Biosciences and Psychology). We continued to carry out the satisfaction survey for graduates of bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and higher arts education, and we published the results of the 2018-2021 satisfaction survey for graduates of higher arts education. AQU Catalunya was involved in drafting the reports analysing the results of the fourth Via Universitària survey and prepared the related dissemination materials. We continued our maintenance work on the Agency's data system and the various tools that allow it to organise its repository of assessment indicators. In 2022 we also produced nine studies and reports drawing from AQU Catalunya's assessment activities and the surveys it coordinates.

**COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY.** This commitment encompasses all the work done by AQU Catalunya to communicate the results of its actions to society:



- > **Knowledge transfer.** In 2022 we gave the EUC Studies website a fresh design. Our goal was to make it simpler and more user-friendly, in order to allow students and their families easier access to the information they need. We also made accessibility improvements, which brought the website into partial compliance with European directives. This website was kept up to date, as was the Catalan Talent Observatory, the site that analyses the jobs

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offered online in Catalonia. Throughout 2022, we organised nine events (eight webinars and one on-site seminar), drawing more than 1,592 registrations altogether. We also put out 60 publications, 24 of which were original texts.

- > **Communication tools.** AQU Catalunya disseminates its activities via the corporate website and other specific websites. We continued to publish our four annual newsletters, with a 14% increase in the number of subscribers (17,285). The Twitter account remained active: by the end of 2022, it had 2,732 followers (10% more than at the end of 2021) and had tweeted 835 times. Moreover, @aqucatalunya was mentioned 656 times and the profile received some 30,600 visits. The YouTube channel, which features videos of AQU Catalunya events, had 12,750 views in 2022, bringing the cumulative total to over 46,324. The LinkedIn account has 352 followers and received 1,506 page views. During the year, AQU Catalunya's quality labels were updated in accordance with its new corporate image.

**COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE.** This commitment encompasses all the actions that AQU Catalunya takes to transparently ensure that it is working towards its goals in an appropriate manner:



- > **Strategic management.** AQU Catalunya passed an international external review of its compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, allowing it to remain on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). We completed the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan with 76% compliance, owing to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and drew up the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, which was submitted for external consultation. The Agency also adopted its agreements through the relevant governing bodies (Governing Board and Standing Commission) and review bodies (Institutional and Programme Review Commission, Research Assessment Commission and Appeals Commission), each of which is technically independent. It also received input from its advisory bodies, including the Advisory Commission, the Committee of Vice-Rectors for Quality and Academic Organisation, the Committee of Vice-Rectors for Students, the Committee of Heads of Technical Quality Units and the Survey Committee. Importantly, new members were appointed to the Student Committee in 2022. During the year, 837 experts collaborated with AQU Catalunya to carry out its assessment tasks. As for students, an agreement was signed with the European Students' Union and an appeal was launched at the Catalan universities to encourage student participation in assessment processes.
- > **Internal organisation.** AQU Catalunya was accountable and transparent in the actions it carried out in 2022. It signed 80 collaboration agreements, carried out non-minor

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procurement procedures using the Generalitat de Catalunya's Electronic Procurement File Manager, and kept its quality management and information security system up and running, while also updating procedures and identifying 144 areas for improvement. In 2022, we carried out a functional analysis and developed both a management tool for degree programme and institution assessment files and a new manager for experts and commissions. Additionally, we continued to perform maintenance work and updates on our software and successfully underwent the controls specified in the ISO 27002 standard on information security. We managed a budget of over five million euros in the course of the year, audited the 2021 accounts and, for the first time, carried out a compliance audit for the year. Finally, AQU Catalunya renewed the lease of its offices for a further five years.

**COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS.** This commitment encompasses all the actions that AQU Catalunya undertakes together with social agents in Catalonia, as well as its institutional relations at national and international level, to ensure maximum visibility and to help improve higher education:



- > **Relations with social agents in Catalonia.** Within the Catalan higher education system, the Agency has relations mainly with the Ministry of Research and Universities and with the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia, where it sits on several commissions. It also liaises with the Ministry of Education to manage the assessment and quality of higher arts education. Finally, it maintains relations with a range of social partners in order to implement the Employers project.
- > **National institutional relations.** AQU Catalunya continued its involvement in the REACU network of Spanish agencies and kept up relations with other state quality assurance agencies. With some of the latter it co-hosted a nationwide webinar and organised a pilot project focusing on the employment outcomes of graduates of bachelor's degrees in Environmental Sciences. As a member of the REACU network, we collaborated intensively throughout the year on the development of protocols and guidelines for adaptation to Royal Decree 822/2021.
- > **International institutional relations.** AQU Catalunya helped to finalise the process of making Barcelona the permanent location for the Secretariat of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). We also maintained relations with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and took part in its General Assembly. We collaborated with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) to develop the Database of External Quality

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Assurance Results (DEQAR). In addition, we continued our involvement in European projects (SMART-QUAL, EPD and Complex). Members of our staff also gave talks and talk part in international discussions on quality assurance and assessment systems in new online environments.

**COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEES.** This commitment encompasses all the actions that AQU Catalunya carries out for its staff, so that they remain committed to their roles and are able to successfully deal with change:



- > **Human resources.** The AQU Catalunya Public Employment Offer was approved in 2022, allowing for 59 structural jobs, which were stabilised. The agreement regulating remote work for the Agency's employees was also approved and implemented. We maintained our Training Plan, which includes the gender perspective in human resources management, and began drawing up the AQU Catalunya Equality Plan.

Those interested can find a fuller explanation of the activities summarised here in this report.



# COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

## 1. INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMME QUALITY

### 1.1. Institutional assessment

In keeping with its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, AQU Catalunya is promoting the institutional assessment of centres, which will gradually replace the assessment of individual training programmes. The actions used to pursue this strategic objective are, firstly, internal quality assurance system (IQAS) implementation certification and, secondly, the institutional accreditation process. The accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks is also an institutional assessment activity.

#### **IQAS implementation certification**

The [IQAS certification programme](#) verifies that the system is up and running in the institution responsible for teaching the degree programmes under the scope of its IQAS, and that it is suitable for 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. No certificate is granted at the end of the assessment process, although the results are taken into account in the subsequent certification of the centre's IQAS.

Given the effects of the pandemic, the visits associated with the certification process (preliminary visit and certification visit) were carried out online until July 2022. Subsequently, the visits were organised following the hybrid model approved on 12 July 2021 by the Institutional and Programme Review Commission, which provides for an online preliminary visit and an in-person certification visit.

A report analysing the process, titled [La certificació dels sistemes interns de garantia de la qualitat al sistema universitari català \(2016-2021\)](#) [Internal quality assurance system certification in the Catalan university system (2016-2021)], was published in 2022. Drawing on its analysis, AQU Catalunya shared key requirements and best practices with the Catalan university system, as well as areas for improvement and recommendations identified in the assessment process during the indicated period. The report was presented at the webinar [Què hem après dels processos de](#)

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*certificació dels sistemes de garantia interna de la qualitat (SGIQ)* [What we have learned from internal quality assurance system (IQAS) certification processes].

Finally, in order to train the members of its external review committees, AQU Catalunya held five training sessions in which 13 experts took part.

### *Results*

In 2022, we completed our assessment of the cross-disciplinary elements in the 2021 call and issued a favourable report, and we initiated a process to assess the cross-disciplinary elements of the IQAS in the 2022 call. The results are shown below:

**Table 2. Universities participating in the assessment process of cross-disciplinary elements, by call**

University	Result	Call
University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia	Favourable	2021
Technical University of Catalonia	Favourable	2022
University of Girona	In progress	2022

AQU Catalunya performed 13 preliminary certification visits to centres to analyse key aspects of their IQAS implementation and, based on this, to determine whether the certification process could move forward.

**Table 3. Centres at which a preliminary visit was conducted (2022 call)**

Centre	University
Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science	UB
Faculty of Biology	UB
Faculty of Education	UB
Faculty of Law	UAB
Salesian University School of Sarrià	UAB
Barcelona East School of Engineering	UPC
Barcelona School of Telecommunications Engineering	UPC
Barcelona School of Nautical Studies	UPC
Faculty and Department of Humanities	UPF
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and Department of Medicine and Life Sciences	UPF
Barcelona Institute for International Studies (IBEI)	UPF

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Centre	University
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (Reus)	URV
School of Agrifood and Forestry Engineering and Veterinary Medicine*	UdL

\* Centre involved in the 2023 call, but for which a preliminary visit was carried out in 2022.

As part of the IQAS implementation certification process, AQU Catalunya completed its assessments for the 2021 call and carried out 13 external visits to centres. The results are shown below:

**Table 4. Centres participating in the IQAS implementation certification process (2022)**

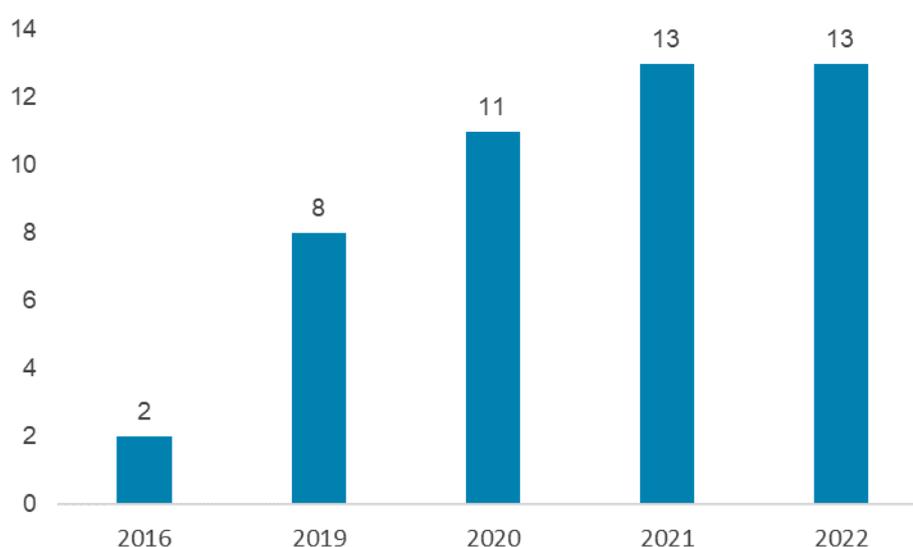
Centre	University	Result	Call
Faculty of Law	UB	Favourable	2021
School of Engineering	UAB	Favourable	2021
Faculty of Communication Sciences	UAB	Favourable	2021
Faculty and Department of Law	UPF	Favourable	2021
Faculty of Arts	URV	Favourable	2021
Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science	UB	Favourable	2022
Faculty of Biology	UB	Pending	2022
Faculty of Education	UB	Pending	2022
Faculty of Law	UAB	Favourable	2022
Salesian University School of Sarrià	UAB	Favourable	2022
Barcelona East School of Engineering	UPC	Pending	2022
Barcelona School of Telecommunications Engineering	UPC	Pending	2022
Barcelona School of Nautical Studies	UPC	Pending	2022
Faculty and Department of Humanities	UPF	Favourable	2022
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and Department of Medicine and Life Sciences	UPF	Favourable	2022
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (Reus)	URV	Favourable	2022
Faculty of Law, Economics and Tourism	UdL	Pending	2022
School of Communication and International Relations (Blanquerna)	URL	Favourable	2022

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

Centres that have their internal quality assurance system certified receive a certificate and a label for differentiation purposes.



Figure 1. Trend in the number of centres visited in the IQAS implementation certification process (2016–2022)



### 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 issues a favourable institutional accreditation report, which remains valid for a maximum period of six years. This 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.

#### *Results*

In 2022, AQU Catalunya assessed nine centres, all of which were issued a favourable assessment report for institutional accreditation.

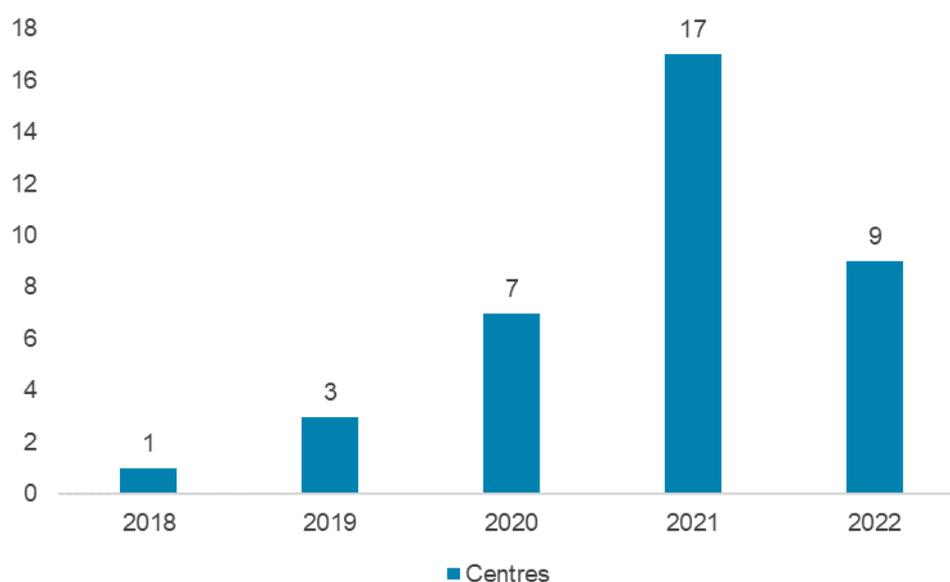
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Table 5. University centres with a favourable institutional accreditation report (2022)

Centre	University	Result
Faculty of Law	UB	Favourable
School of Engineering	UAB	Favourable
Faculty of Communication Sciences	UAB	Favourable
Faculty of Law	UAB	Favourable
Faculty and Department of Law	UPF	Favourable
Faculty and Department of Humanities	UPF	Favourable
Faculty of Arts	URV	Favourable
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	URV	Favourable
School of Communication and International Relations (Blanquerna)	URL	Favourable

By the end of 2022, there were 37 institutionally accredited centres in Catalonia.

Figure 2. Trend in the number of centres receiving a favourable institutional accreditation report from AQU Catalunya (2018-2022)



Institutionally accredited centres may use the label identifying them as AQU Catalunya-accredited centres.



# COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

## Accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks

Since 2003, AQU Catalunya has been working with Catalan universities on developing and applying models for the [assessment of their teaching staff](#), with the aim of supporting universities in the design of their own mechanisms for managing the quality of teaching of university teaching staff and promoting their development and recognition, in accordance with European quality assurance standards and guidelines.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya began the process of renewing the accreditation of the teaching assessment handbooks at Ramon Llull University (URL) and the International University of Catalonia (UIC). It also launched a process to verify the assessment handbook of the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (Uvic-UCC) and another to monitor the handbook of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC).

With regard to the public universities, the Specific Commission for Teaching and Management Activity monitored the implementation of the conditions and recommendations established in the third process to renew the accreditation of the teaching assessment handbooks.

Finally, in 2022 AQU Catalunya participated in the working groups of the Margalida Comas programme, a Generalitat de Catalunya initiative to improve university teaching and learning. The groups working to improve teaching developed a number of proposals for improvement (e.g. teaching portfolios and a student survey system) that tie in with AQU Catalunya's teaching assessment programme.

## 1.2. Assessment of university degrees

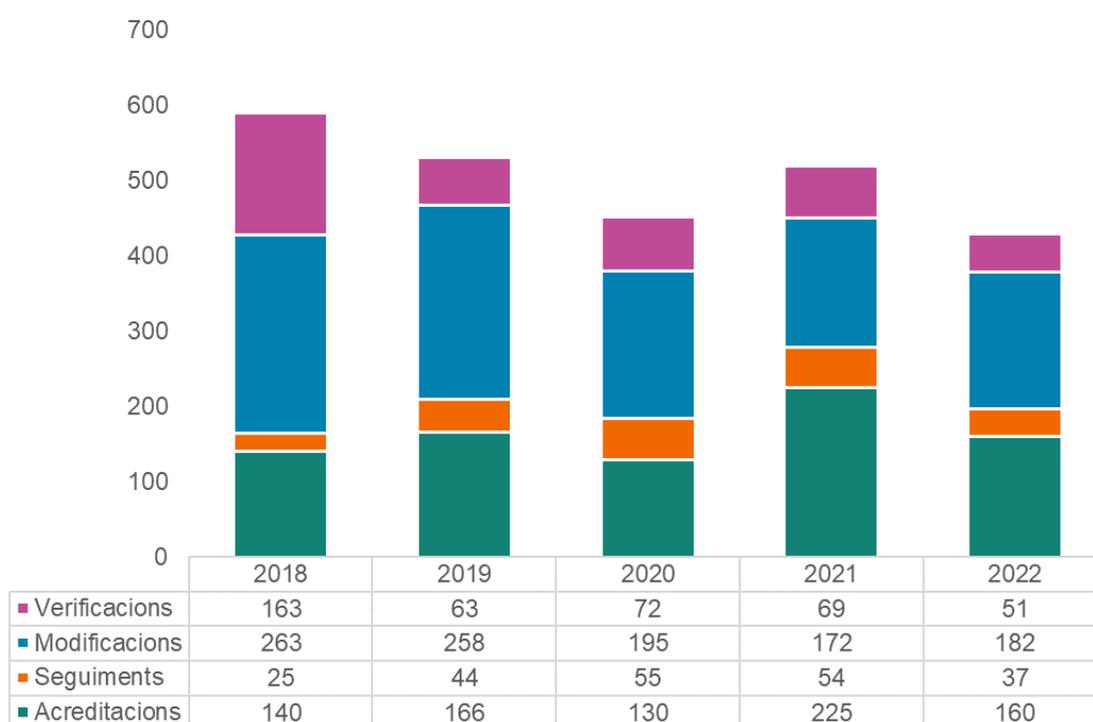
AQU Catalunya approved in 2010 and updated in 2016 its [framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees](#), with the aim of implementing a cyclical and standardised external assessment system for recognised university degrees in Catalan universities and higher arts education.

This framework establishes the relationship between the processes involved in **validation** (assessment prior to implementation), monitoring the performance of the degree, **modification** to make the improvements detected during the monitoring phase, and **accreditation**, which verifies that the degree programme is being implemented as planned by means of an external visit by a committee of experts. Recognised university degrees must cyclically pass an accreditation process in order to be taught.

The assessments carried out under this framework in Catalonia over the last five years are shown below:

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Figure 3. Trend in validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation assessments (2018-2022)<sup>1</sup>



Overall, the number of degrees undergoing any assessment process (validation, monitoring, modification or accreditation) dropped in 2022. Specifically, 90 fewer degrees were assessed as compared to 2021. This decrease is particularly significant in the number of accredited degree programmes ( $n = 65$ ). This is the result of some university centres that coordinate many <sup>2</sup>degree programmes obtaining institutional accreditation, as well as the application of Royal Decree 822/2021, which establishes a maximum period of six years for renewal of university master's degree accreditation.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya carried out a total of 89 visits for degree programme accreditation purposes. The number of visits was 26% lower than in 2021. It should be noted, however, that these visits were more complex in nature. This is because the 2021 visits were all conducted online and the 2022 visits were conducted in a number of ways: online, hybrid or in person.

### Validation, modification and monitoring

By means of [validation](#), AQU Catalunya aims to ensure the quality of the design of proposed bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes prior to their implementation.

<sup>1</sup> Includes higher arts education equivalent to bachelor's and master's degrees.

<sup>2</sup> Between 2018 and 2022, AQU Catalunya institutionally accredited a total of 37 centres.

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In terms of methodology, the new *Guide to the formulation, validation and modification of recognised bachelor's and master's degree programmes*, drawn up in accordance with the new regulations set forth in Royal Decree 822/2021, was applied for the first time in 2022. This guide was presented to the university community at the webinar entitled [\*El nou procés de verificació\*](#) [The new validation process].

The Agency carried out a preliminary assessment of the recognised bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees proposed by Catalan universities for implementation in the 2022-2023 academic year. Specifically, the Catalan universities submitted 51 proposals to the validation process: 23 bachelor's degrees and 28 master's degrees. Of these, 86% were issued a favourable assessment report. By level of education, favourable assessment reports were granted to 90% of the proposed bachelor's degrees and 82% of the proposed master's degrees.

The validated degrees received the corresponding seal, which distinguishes them for having successfully undergone this process.



With regard to requests to [modify](#) degree programmes, we received 182 proposals in 2022 to be implemented in the 2022-2023 academic year: 81 bachelor's degrees, 77 master's degrees and 24 doctoral degrees. Five of the modification requests were withdrawn by the university; the remaining 177 were all issued favourable assessment reports.

In the [monitoring](#) process, the university can correct observed deviations or propose changes to improve the performance of the degree programme and to prepare for the next accreditation process. In 2022 AQU Catalunya assessed the monitoring of 17 degree programmes that had received conditional accreditation reports and 20 degree programmes whose validation reports contained requirements. Altogether, it analysed the monitoring reports of 37 degree programmes at 25 centres: eight bachelor's degrees (four university and four arts education), 27 master's degrees (all at university level) and two doctoral degrees.

By the time this report was completed, 64.8% of the final monitoring reports (24) had been issued.

### Ex ante accreditation of short learning 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 build bridges between the two educational systems (academic and vocational), as well as to promote lifelong learning.

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In 2022, AQU Catalunya assessed eight programmes linked to the automotive industry and sustainable mobility, all of which received a favourable assessment report, as well as eight programmes in the field of renewable energies, which are still awaiting a final decision.

Table 6. Short learning programmes that have been accredited ex ante (2022)

Area	Proposal
<b>Automotive industry and sustainable mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Robotics and Automation for the Automotive Industry</li><li>&gt; Digitisation of Automotive Manufacturing</li><li>&gt; Advanced Materials for Vehicles</li><li>&gt; Urban Mobility Systems</li><li>&gt; Cybersecurity for Vehicles</li><li>&gt; Electric <u>Vehicles</u></li><li>&gt; Connected Vehicle Technologies</li><li>&gt; ADAS Systems for Vehicles</li></ul>
<b>Renewable energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Production Projects and Bioenergetic Applications</li><li>&gt; Integration of Storage Technologies</li><li>&gt; Operation and Planning of Intelligent Electrical Networks</li><li>&gt; Energy Management in Industrial Systems, Buildings and Equipment</li><li>&gt; Hydrogen: Production, Conservation and Applications</li><li>&gt; Business Planning in the Energy Transition</li><li>&gt; Specialist in Photovoltaic Systems: New Designs, Measurements and Materials</li><li>&gt; Connection to the Grid and Integration of Wind Energy</li></ul>

Favourably assessed short learning programmes are awarded a quality label that remains valid for six years.



### Accreditation

Accreditation is the verification based on an external visit that the degree programme is being carried out as planned. All recognised university degrees must undergo the accreditation process within six years of the initial validation (or most recent accreditation). Each year, the universities and AQU Catalunya jointly plan the external visits for the degree programmes that are due to start the accreditation process.

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In relation to methodology, the new version of the [\*Guide to the accreditation of recognised bachelor's and master's degree programmes\*](#) was published. Two reports analysing the accreditation processes were also published in 2022, namely [\*L'acreditació dels programes de doctorat de les universitats catalanes \(2018-2021\)\*](#) [The accreditation of doctoral programmes at Catalan universities (2018-2021)] and the [\*Informe sobre les visites d'avaluació externa en format virtual\*](#) [Report on online external review visits], the latter explaining how online visits were conducted during the pandemic.

In order to ensure that the external review committees perform as expected and consistently apply the assessment criteria, 11 online training sessions were held for their members. These were attended by 104 people (68 for bachelor's and master's degrees and 36 for doctoral degree programmes).

In total, 89 external visits were organised to assess the performance of 160 degree programmes. Eighty-two bachelor's degrees, 18 master's degrees (including one in arts education) and 60 doctoral degree programmes were visited. During the second half of 2022, the external visits were once again conducted in person.

Table 7. Centres visited, number of visits carried out and degrees assessed, by university (2022)

University	Centres visited	Number of visits carried out	Degrees assessed
University of Barcelona	11	33	59
Autonomous University of Barcelona	6	14	24
Technical University of Catalonia	9	9	14
Pompeu Fabra University	4	5	10
Ramon Llull University	0	0	0
University of Lleida	5	5	13
University of Girona	5	7	18
Rovira i Virgili University	2	2	3
Open University of Catalonia	0	0	0
University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia	5	6	9
International University of Catalonia	4	6	8
Abat Oliba CEU University	1	1	1
<b>Total for universities</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>159</b>
Higher arts education	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>160</b>

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### *2021 accreditation reports*

In 2022, AQU Catalunya issued the 116 remaining final accreditation reports for recognised university degrees visited in 2021.

Added to the 108 already issued in 2021, this makes a total of 224 accreditation reports for the 2021 call. Of the degree programmes accredited in 2021, 20% received a progressing towards excellence rating.

**Table 8. Accreditation results by degree level (2021)**

	Accredited with conditions	Accredited	Accredited, progressing towards excellence	Total	Percentage of accredited degrees progressing towards excellence
Bachelor's degrees	12	56	4	72	5%
Master's degrees	12	66	17	95	18%
Doctoral programmes	1	32	24	57	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Table 9. Accreditation results by specific assessment commission (2021)**

	Accredited with conditions	Accredited	Accredited, progressing towards excellence	Total	Percentage of accredited degrees progressing towards excellence
Arts and Humanities	11	16	3	30	10%
Social and Legal Sciences	3	41	3	47	6%
Experimental Sciences		14	6	20	30%
Health sciences	7	22	1	30	33%
Engineering and Architecture	3	29	8	40	20%
PhD	1	32	24	57	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>20%</b>

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### *Results of the 2022 accreditation reports*

In 2022, AQU Catalunya issued 97 final accreditation reports out of the 160 total recognised university degree programmes visited during the year. Of the 97 final reports it did issue, 17% of the accredited degree programmes received a progressing towards excellence rating and 7% were accredited with conditions.

Table 10. Accreditation results by degree level (2022)

	Accredited with conditions	Accredited	Accredited, progressing towards excellence	Total	Percentage of accredited degrees progressing towards excellence
Bachelor's degrees	4	49	4	57	7%
Master's degrees	2	8	4	14	29%
Doctoral programmes	1	17	8	26	31%
Total	7	74	16	97	17%

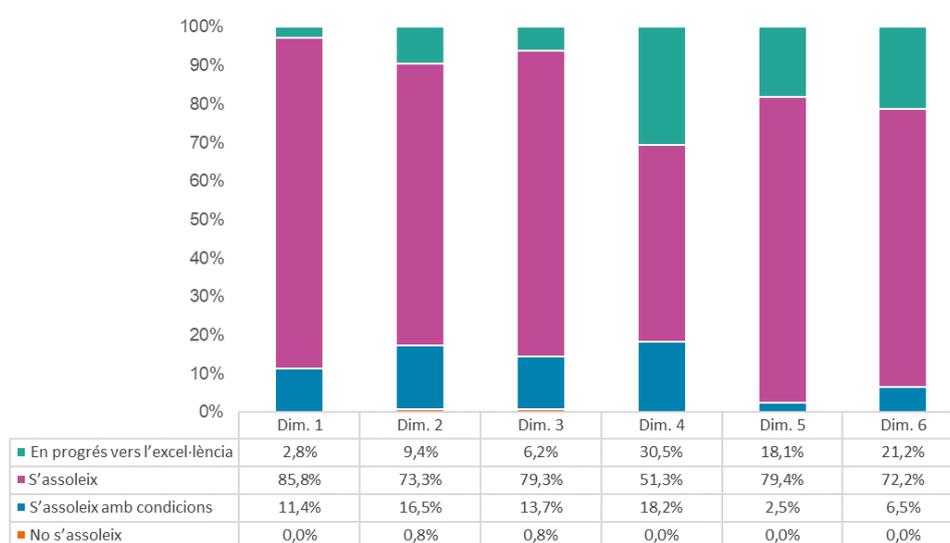
### *Results according to the assessed dimensions*

All the dimensions assessed in the accreditation process received a generally positive score. However, differences were observed between them.

In the five-year period between 2017 and 2021, the “suitability of teaching staff for the degree programme” dimension scored the highest, with 30.5% of the degrees deemed to be progressing towards excellence in this regard. This dimension also had the highest percentage of degrees with conditions, standing at 18.2%.

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Figure 4. Results broken down by dimension assessed (2017-2021)



Dim. 1: quality of the degree programme; Dim. 2: relevance of public information; Dim. 3: effectiveness of the IQAS; Dim. 4: suitability of teaching staff for the degree programme; Dim. 5: effectiveness of learning support systems; Dim. 6: quality of programme (learning) outcomes.

The issued reports are officially forwarded to the competent national and regional bodies so that the degree programmes' administrative accreditation process can move ahead.

Once a degree has been accredited, AQU Catalunya delivers the certificates and quality labels to the universities so that they can use them to stand out.



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

AQU Catalunya has identified the internationalisation of university programmes offered in Catalonia as one of the areas for promoting excellence in higher education.

Work was carried out with the Catalan university system in this area in 2022 to support two activities:

- > The assessment of interuniversity programmes according to the European Approach.
- > The accreditation of medical degree programmes according to the Basic Medical Education Standards of the World Federation for Medical Education.

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Universities were also supported through the integrated accreditation process so that they could obtain international subject-specific certifications such as EUR-ACE®.

### Assessment of interuniversity programmes according to the European Approach

The [European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes\(EA\)](#) aims to simplify the external review processes of European joint degrees by using common standards. This methodology can only be applied to programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions in two or more states.

AQU Catalunya updated the following methodological documents in 2022, pursuant to Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university studies and the procedure for quality assurance:

- > Conditions for the recognition by AQU Catalunya of joint programme accreditation using the European Approach.
- > Guide to ex-ante accreditation of joint programmes using the European Approach.

Several meetings were held with the Catalan universities throughout 2022 to go over the process and make a plan for the assessment processes that would be taking place in 2023.

### Accreditation of AQU Catalunya by the World Federation for Medical Education

The internationalisation of medical education in quality assurance processes is a relevant issue. AQU Catalunya is aware of the growing interest in the international accreditation of basic medical training and therefore places special emphasis on introducing the global standards of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) into the current accreditation process.



Since 2021, AQU Catalunya has been accredited by the WFME, meaning that all the faculties of Medicine that AQU Catalunya accredits under these standards also bear this worldwide accreditation.

In 2022, a new guide was approved for the accreditation of medical degrees according to AQU Catalunya standards and the Basic Medical Education Standards of the WFME. This guide includes the changes introduced by Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university studies and the procedure for quality assurance; the Basic Medical Education Standards approved in 2020; and the areas for improvements identified in the accreditation pilot.

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### Certifications of degrees by subject matter

In accordance with the [framework for the positioning of AQU Catalunya with regard to quality labels by subject matter](#), the Agency carried out an integrated assessment for degree programme accreditation and for the international subject-specific certifications EUR-ACE® and Euro-Inf.

Table 11. Degree programmes with the international subject-specific certification EUR-ACE® (2022)

University	Degree
University of Barcelona	Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Engineering
Technical University of Catalonia	University Master's Degree in Civil Engineering
Rovira i Virgili University	Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering
	Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering

### 1.4. Methodology

#### Methodological documents

Intensive work was carried out in 2022 to review the methodological materials involved in the degree validation and accreditation process. The purpose of this major endeavour was to bring these materials into line with Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university studies and the procedure for quality assurance. The new legal framework brought about a relevant change in curricular design, especially given the need to work by means of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences).

AQU Catalunya drew up the [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees](#). This document sets out and explains how to apply the standards and criteria for the quality assessment of training programmes, as established by AQU Catalunya in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015, the primary goal of which is to ensure equivalence between the programme taught and European qualification levels. It also updated nine assessment guides.

### 1.5. Degree programme and institutional appeals

In relation to the processes for reviewing university degree programmes, the Appeals Commission received two appeals in 2022: one on the accreditation of cross-cutting issues affecting doctoral programmes and another on the accreditation qualification process.

The first appeal, which was lodged against the cross-cutting external assessment report of the External Assessment Committee of the Graduate and Doctoral School, was rejected in its entirety.

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The second appeal requested a modification to the score given for dimension 3. This was upheld and the score was changed to “Compliant”, without affecting the areas of improvement specified for the programme.

### 2. TEACHING STAFF QUALITY

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

- > **Teacher accreditation.** One of AQU Catalunya's functions is to assess research. This allows it to certify that applicants meet a minimum threshold of quality, scientific experience and/or research output before they can apply for jobs at universities. This applies to each of the posts established in Catalonia (tenure-eligible lecturer, associate professor and full professor).
- > **Assessment of merits.** 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 commissions. In addition to these assessment activities, the Research Assessment Commission did the following in 2022:

- > It approved the findings report for the analysis of Education, which led to this field being given singular status for a period of three years.
- > It extended the validity of the singular status of Nursing and adjusted the criteria adopted by the Specific Commission for Health and Medical Sciences to be able to recognise the professional merits of tenure-eligible lecturers in this field.
- > It revised its assessment criteria so as to better serve the reality of Fine Arts education.
- > It simplified and modernised the assessment procedures for research merits, differentiating assessment and recognition procedures and introducing HTML multi-device forms.
- > It reflected on new approaches to research assessment that take into account outcomes, placements and other activities to maximise the quality and impact of research.
- > It published the report [\*The gender perspective in teaching staff accreditation.\*](#)
- > It published the report [\*Associate professor profiles \(2017-2019\).\*](#)
- > It modified the assessment procedure for research periods in order to equalise their score in all calls for applications from 2024 onwards, thereby establishing the ANECA-CNEAI assessment procedure for research periods.
- > It took part in the plan to strengthen the Catalan language in the Catalan university and research system, which led, among other things, to the preparation of the report *Revistes científiques i erudites de Catalunya* [Catalan scientific and scholarly journals].



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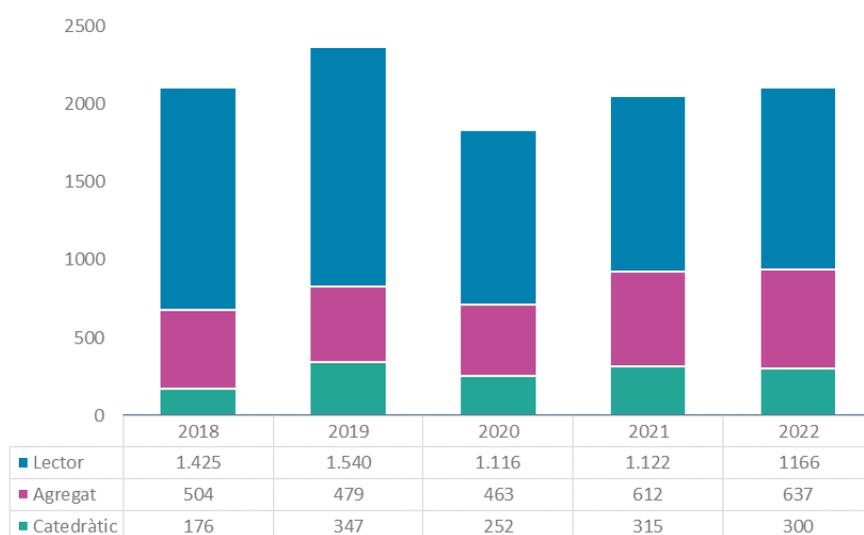
Finally, following its signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), AQU Catalunya joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) to contribute to the discussion on moving towards a new research assessment model.

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

In order to be admitted to the selection processes for recruiting teaching staff to Catalan public universities, interested parties must have a favourable preliminary report, in the case of tenure-eligible lecturers, and accreditation of research or advanced research, for associate professors and full professors. Accreditation is the regulatory mechanism that enables AQU Catalunya to determine whether applicants meet a minimum threshold of quality, scientific experience and/or research output before they can apply for jobs at universities. Accordingly, accreditations are not used to rank individuals or to guarantee employment contracts.

In 2022, the Agency received 2,103 applications, 2.6% more than in 2021.

Figure 5. Trend in the number of applications for tenure-eligible lecturer, associate professor and full professor (2018-2022)



#### Reports for tenure-eligible lecturers

The post of tenure-eligible lecturer is the entry-level position for contractual university teaching posts and offers the possibility of promotion to higher posts with a permanent contract. Since the launch of the [reports for tenure-eligible lecturers](#) in 2003, the Agency has assessed 15,936 applications.

In 2022, the Research Assessment Commission modified the assessment criteria for issuing reports for tenure-eligible lecturers in the particular field of Nursing and Physiotherapy to give greater relevance to professional merits. These criteria came into force for the second call of the year.

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Four calls for tenure-eligible lecturers were opened in 2022: two ordinary calls and two specific calls for applicants applying through the Serra Húnter Programme. A total of 1,166 applications were submitted, representing a 3.9% increase compared to 2021.

In relation to the Serra Húnter Programme, 236 applications were submitted for the two specific calls in 2022, 39.5% less than the year before.

The Research Assessment Commission 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 2022, AQU Catalunya processed the applications submitted in the second set of calls in 2021 and the first set of calls in 2022.

### Reports for Serra Húnter Programme temporary teaching staff

The [reports for Serra Húnter Programme temporary teaching staff](#) are designed for Catalan public university staff who have a contract as a tenure-eligible lecturer under the Serra Húnter Programme.

In order to apply for this report, applicants must meet two requirements. First, they must have a valid contract as a Serra Húnter Programme tenure-eligible lecturer and, secondly, they must have been issued a favourable research accreditation report by AQU Catalunya.

The call for applications for this report remained open throughout the year. Twenty-seven applications were submitted, of which 18 were deemed suitable, one was deemed unsuitable, two were closed without assessment and six are still being assessed.

### Accreditation of research and advanced research

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

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

Since 2003, AQU Catalunya has assessed 13,263 applications for research and advanced research accreditations.

In 2022, it launched four calls for research accreditation and four calls for advanced research accreditation: two ordinary calls for research accreditation and two specific calls for applicants applying through the Serra Húnter Programme; and two ordinary advanced research accreditation calls and two advanced research accreditation calls under the agreement with the University of Navarra.

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The number of applications submitted in the calls for research accreditation and advanced research accreditation remained virtually the same in 2022, with only 1% fewer than the year before.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya processed the applications submitted in the second set of calls in 2021 and the first set of calls in 2022. The results of these calls were as follows:

**Table 12. Second call in 2021 for research accreditation and Serra Húnter Programme research accreditation. Results<sup>3</sup>**

Area of knowledge	T	NA	AU	TF	TU	% F
Humanities	23	0	1	16	7	69.6%
Social Sciences	78	3	1	53	22	70.7%
Experimental Sciences	27	0	0	24	3	88.9%
Life Sciences	32	1	0	21	10	67.7%
Health and Medical Sciences	78	4	3	42	32	56.8%
Engineering and Architecture	44	2	1	35	7	83.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>70.2%</b>

**Table 13. Second call in 2021 for advanced research accreditation. Results<sup>4</sup>**

Area of knowledge	T	NA	AU	AR	TF	TU	% F
Humanities	14	0	2	2	8	6	57.1%
Social Sciences	39	0	0	4	23	16	59.0%
Experimental Sciences	14	0	0	1	11	3	78.6%
Life Sciences	15	0	0	2	10	5	66.7%
Health and Medical Sciences	29	1	0	4	13	15	46.4%
Engineering and Architecture	31	1	1	4	17	13	56.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>58.6%</b>

<sup>3</sup> T: total number of applications; NA: not assessable; AU: appeals upheld; AR: appeals rejected; PA: pending appeals; TF: total favourable; TU: total unfavourable; % F: percentage of total favourable.

<sup>4</sup> T: total number of applications; NA: not assessable; AU: appeals upheld; AR: appeals rejected; TF: total favourable; TU: total unfavourable; % F: percentage of total favourable.

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The results of the assessed 2022 research accreditation calls were as follows:

**Table 14. First call in 2022 for research accreditation and Serra Húnter Programme research accreditation. Results**

Area of knowledge	T	NA	PA	TF	TU	% F
Humanities	55	4	1	41	10	80.4%
Social Sciences	105	12	10	62	31	66.7%
Experimental Sciences	25	1	2	18	6	75.0%
Life Sciences	21	2	0	12	7	63.2%
Health and Medical Sciences	62	3	7	27	32	45.8%
Engineering and Architecture	47	2	5	33	12	73.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>66.3%</b>

**Table 15. Second call in 2022 for research accreditation and Serra Húnter Programme research accreditation. Applications<sup>5</sup>**

Area of knowledge	T	CWR	P
Humanities	44	5	39
Social Sciences	84	8	76
Experimental Sciences	32	2	30
Life Sciences	22	2	20
Health and Medical Sciences	76	11	65
Engineering and Architecture	64	4	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>290</b>

## 2.2. Assessment of research, teaching and management merits

The allocation of salary supplements to civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities is linked to the assessment of individual merits in research, teaching and management. When assessing teaching and management merits, AQU Catalunya certifies that the universities have applied the assessment process as stipulated. When it comes to

<sup>5</sup>T: total number of applications; CWR: closed without resolution; P: pending.

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sexennials, it recognises the previous assessments carried out (in the case of civil servants) and carries out the assessment itself (in the case of non-civil servants).

### Research merits

AQU Catalunya directly assesses the individual research merits of its non-civil servant teaching and research staff in line with the established procedure and criteria, and recognises the assessments carried out by the National Research Activity Assessment Committee (CNEAI) for civil servant university teaching staff who request it to do so.

In 2022, research merit procedures were simplified by differentiating between assessment and recognition, using multi-device HTML forms that modernise the process. Due to this change, it is not possible to compare the results to those of previous years.

To make it easier for interested parties to submit their application and short CV, AQU Catalunya produced a video-tutorial on this process called “Tutorial for filling out your assessment application and short CV”.

Applicants were able to automatically fill in the contributions to be assessed 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, the category and the rank of those contributions present in the journals indexed in the Clarivate Analytics Journal Citation Reports. This streamlines the submission process for applicants and the assessment process for the commissions. A total of 2,700 people have used the service since it was launched, including 723 in 2022.

As for civil servant teaching and research staff, a call for the recognition and assessment of research merits was launched in 2022, bringing in 594 applications, 29.1% more than the year before. Of these applications, 514 were for recognition and 80 were for assessment. All completed applications for recognition were recognised.

With regard to non-civil servant teaching and research staff, AQU Catalunya opened a call for applications, implementing the simplified procedure that distinguishes between applications for assessment and applications for recognition of research merits. In 2022, 1,390 applications were received for the assessment of sexennials for non-civil servant teaching and research staff, 99.7% more than in 2021. In addition, 45 applications for recognition were submitted, all of which were approved.

### Assessment of research periods under agreements

AQU Catalunya has signed various agreements to assess the research activity of teaching and/or post-doctoral 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:

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**Table 16. Affiliated centres with an agreement for the assessment of the research periods of their teaching staff**

University	Centre
UB	CETT - Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy EINA - University School of Design and Art of Barcelona EISJD - San Juan de Dios School of Nursing
UB and UdL	INEFC - National Institute for Physical Education of Catalonia
UAB	EUSS - Salesian University School of Sarrià Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau Health Management Foundation
UPC	EUNCET - Euncet Business School
UPF	BSM - Barcelona School of Management ESIM - Mar Nursing School TecnoCampus Mataró-Maresme Foundation IBEI - Barcelona Institute for International Studies Foundation
UdG	ERAM - ERAM University School EU Mediterrani - Mediterrani University School EUSES - University School of Health and Sports
URV	CESDA - Centre for Advanced Aviation Studies EUSES-TE - University School of Health and Sports
UVic-UCC	BAU - Barcelona College of Arts and Design ESERP - Barcelona School of Business and Social Science

The criteria and procedures are the same as those used to assess the research activity of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff at Catalan public universities.

**Table 17. Institutions with which an agreement has been signed for the assessment of the research periods of their teaching staff. Results for 2021<sup>6</sup>**

Institution	T	NA	P	PA	TF	TU	% F
Private universities and affiliated centres	214	54	-	13	124	23	77.5%
UPC and UAB research staff	17	9	-	1	7	1	87.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>77.8%</b>

<sup>6</sup>T: total number of applications; NA: not assessable; P: pending; PA: pending appeals; TF: total favourable; TU: total unfavourable; % F: percentage of total favourable without accounting for those not assessed.

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### Assessment of Ramon y Cajal and Beatriz Galindo research staff

AQU Catalunya has signed an [agreement](#) with the public universities in Catalonia under which it agrees to issue reports recognising the research activity (for periods of six years) of Ramón y Cajal and Beatriz Galindo research staff.

This call was launched for the first time in 2022. The assessment criteria are the same as those used to assess the research merits of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff at Catalan public universities. The universities with which AQU Catalunya has signed an agreement are: University of Barcelona, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Polytechnic University of Catalonia, Pompeu Fabra University, University of Lleida, University of Girona and Rovira i Virgili University.

#### *Results*

The results of this call were as follows:

Table 18. Results of the 2022 call for applications to assess Ramón y Cajal and Beatriz Galindo research staff at Catalan public universities<sup>7</sup>

	T	NA	P	PA	TF	TU	% F
Ramón y Cajal and Beatriz Galindo research staff at public universities	127	26	-	4	92	9	91.1%

### Certification of teaching merits

In order to assess the teaching activity of teaching and research staff, Catalan universities apply their respective AQU Catalunya-accredited teaching assessment handbooks. The universities then send their teaching assessment reports to the Agency, where the Specific Commission for Teaching and Management Activity certifies that the assessments have been carried in accordance with these handbooks.

#### *Results*

Figures on the number of applicants certified are shown below:

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<sup>7</sup>T: total number of applications; NA: not assessable; P: pending; PA: pending appeals; TF: total favourable; TU: total unfavourable; % F: percentage of total favourable.

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Table 19. Results of the 2021 call for the certification of teaching merit assessment

Potential applicants <sup>8</sup>	Total applicants	Percentage of applications	Favourable	Unfavourable	Percentage favourable/ applications	Percentage favourable/ potential
2,512	1,456	58%	1,347	35	92.5%	53.6%

Figure 6. Trend in the assessment of teaching merits (2017-2021)



### Certificates of teaching (CAAD)

The teaching certification is intended for teaching staff who have received research and/or advanced research accreditation from AQU Catalunya.<sup>9</sup>

The certificate of teaching recognises that the teaching carried out by the applicant meets pre-established teaching requirements and may be considered by universities in their competitive selection processes.

Four applications were submitted in 2022, all of which are pending.

### Results

The following table shows the certificates of teaching issued between 2017 and 2021.

<sup>8</sup>The number of potential applicants includes teachers from previous calls with the option to participate in the 2022 call.

<sup>9</sup> Resolution UNI/1239/2004, of 26 April, and Resolution UNI/3130/2005, of 28 October.

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

Table 20. Certificates of teaching (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Favourable	1	1	1	50	19
Not assessable	-	-	-	-	6
Total applications	1	1	1	50	25

### Assessment of management merits

Catalan universities assess the individual management merits of their civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and management staff, applying the instructions approved by AQU Catalunya and the Directorate General for Universities for this assessment. Once the teaching staff has been assessed, the university sends the assessment reports to the Agency to certify that the assessment follows the aforementioned instructions.

### Results

In 2022 AQU Catalunya certified the assessment of the following 2021 periods:

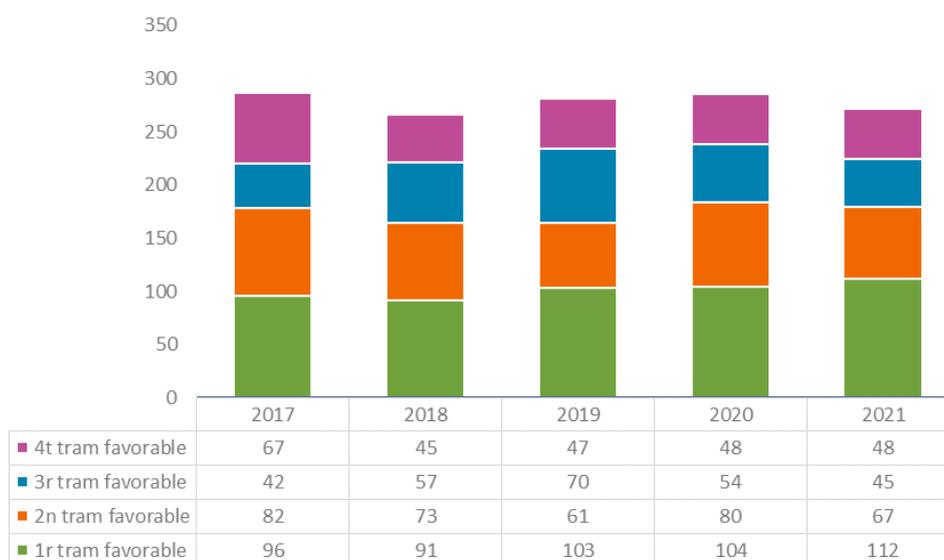
Table 21. Results of the 2021 call for management merit assessment certification<sup>10</sup>

Periods assessed	Favourable	Unfavourable	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period
272	272	-	112	67	45	48

<sup>10</sup> The information provided in the table refers to assessed periods, not to individuals.

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

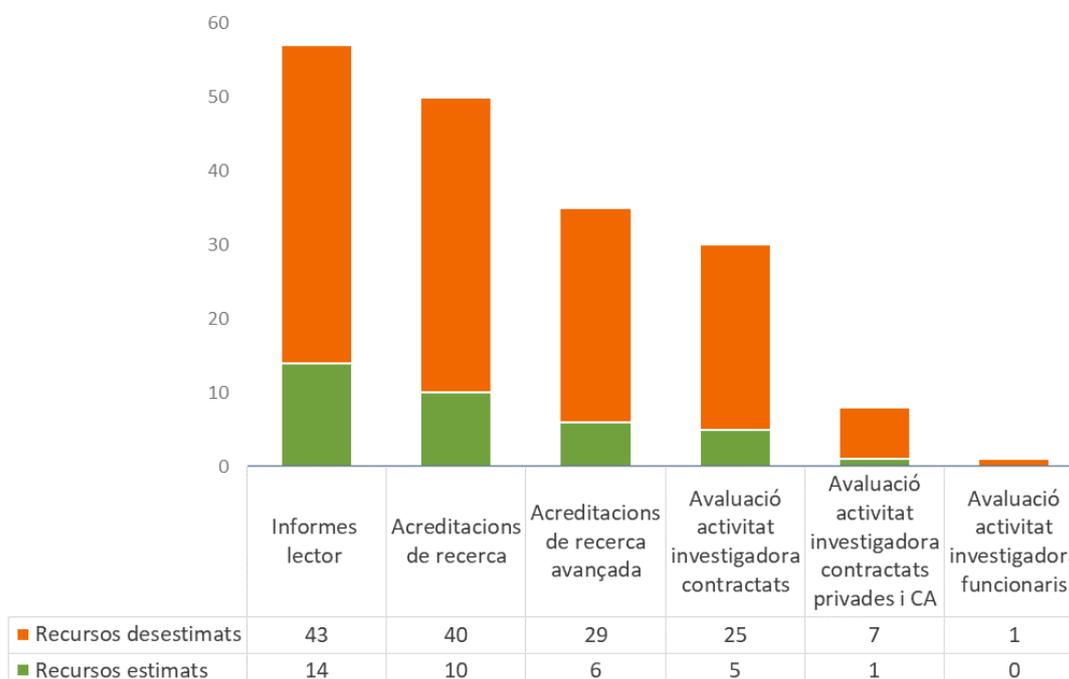
Figure 7. Trend in management merit assessment (2017-2021)



### 2.3. Appeals in teaching staff assessment processes

A total of 181 appeals related to university teaching staff assessment processes were lodged in 2022 for closed calls. The Appeals Commission upheld 20% of them.

Figure 8. Appeals resolved in 2022 for closed 2021 calls, by type



### 3. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

#### 3.1. Surveys and indicators of the Catalan university system

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

AQU Catalunya has been coordinating this study every three years since 2000. All Catalan universities now take part. This includes public universities (through their social councils) and private universities, affiliated centres and schools of higher arts education in Catalonia. The goal is to gain data and insights into the quality of their students' employment outcomes.

With regard to methodology, in 2022 AQU Catalunya published the report [Adaptació de la metodologia de l'enquesta d'inserció laboral 2023 a un model mixt: electrònic i telefònic](#) [Adapting the methodology of the 2023 employment outcomes survey to a mixed-methods model: online and by telephone]. The report analyses the advantages and possible disadvantages of using this mixed-methods model for data collection, detailing what measures can be taken to improve efficiency in this respect.

A new approach was also taken to encourage participation in the survey and thus increase the response rate. Specifically, a campaign was designed to promote and explain the project in a video that was shared on the Agency's social media and on those of the participating universities.

In 2022, the Agency began its eighth employment outcomes study, which will look at bachelor's degree graduates who completed their studies in 2019 and 2020 (except for medical students, who completed their studies in 2016 and 2017); graduates with higher arts bachelor's degrees who completed their studies in 2018 and 2019; graduates with university and higher arts master's degrees who completed their studies in 2018 and 2019; and doctoral degree graduates who defended their theses in 2018 and 2019.

AQU Catalunya did the following in 2022:

- > It managed, validated, debugged and codified the universities and centres' contact lists. Specifically, it managed nearly 90,000 contacts.
- > It reviewed the questionnaires and their corresponding indicator catalogues.
- > It managed administrative documents, agreements, data protection and budgetary matters.
- > It prepared the public tender for the telephone survey and chose a winning bidder.
- > It designed and prepared materials and a communication campaign to disseminate the study.

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- > Online phase of the fieldwork: it programmed the questionnaires, tracked the response, and validated and debugged the answers. It met its expected quota, with 15,810 surveys completed.
- > Telephone phase of the fieldwork: it reviewed the questionnaire programming and prepared the necessary documents.

As part of this study, AQU Catalunya signed a collaboration agreement with the Valencian Agency for Assessment and Foresight to carry out a study on the employment outcomes of graduates of the bachelor's degrees in Environmental Sciences at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the University of Valencia and the Miguel Hernández University of Elche.

### University graduates' employment outcomes. Idescat population study

The Business Climate Survey ([CLEM](#)), which is designed and managed by the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (Idescat), offers a general yet representative overview of the region, drawing on the opinion of representatives of Catalan establishments with regard to economic trends and expectations. AQU Catalunya helped to prepare the section on the current entrepreneurial situation. This section of the CLEM for the second quarter of 2021 complements the information provided by the AQU Catalunya employment outcomes study.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya analysed the results and published them in an [infographic on the Employers project website](#). AQU Catalunya technical staff also went over these results in their presentation at the "Employability and university education in the field of Economics and Business" conference, which was held on 20 July.

### Employment outcomes from the employers' point of view

Since 2014, AQU Catalunya has been conducting a study every three years on the opinion of employers regarding the university education of recent graduates. This study, which complements the triennial survey of Catalan university graduates, aims to provide universities with insight into what the job market thinks about their graduates' competences and university education. The aim is to enable universities to develop policies to improve the university system in terms of the academic offer and training programmes, and thus bring university education and the labour market closer together.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya completed its fieldwork for the third employers' opinion study (2021-2023) by surveying the remaining sectors:<sup>11</sup> schools that hire graduates of the bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood and Primary Education and the Master's Degree in Secondary Education (MUFPE), and healthcare facilities that hire nurses and doctors. During the first half of 2022, AQU Catalunya

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<sup>11</sup>The sectors surveyed in 2021 were: Communication, Pharmacy, Economics and Business, Psychology, Biosciences, Production Engineering, Construction, Law and Legal Practice, Tourism, Design, ICT and Teaching.

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

reviewed the questionnaires for these two sectors, programmed the online survey and collected the data.

The following table contains the main indicators of the data collected:

Table 22. Indicators from the first phase of the survey

Survey type	Number of employers contacted	Number of valid answers	Response rate
Schools	2,980	420	14.1%
Healthcare facilities - Nursing contacts	684	99	14.5%
Health centres - Medicine contacts	610	100	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,274</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>14.5%</b>

In 2022, the webinar series dubbed “Employability and university education” was designed to disseminate the results of the study, and the corresponding results reports were published for the following sectors: [Communication](#), [Pharmacy](#), [Economics and Business](#), [Biosciences](#) and [Psychology](#).

The webinar videos have been viewed 1,512 times on YouTube.

### Satisfaction survey of bachelor’s, master’s and higher arts education graduates

The satisfaction survey provides insight into students’ satisfaction with the teaching-learning process, with the services and facilities, and with the results they achieved while at university. The aim is to provide comparable indicators so that it is easier to pinpoint a university degree’s strengths and areas for improvement.

The results of the survey on the satisfaction of higher arts education graduates (EAS) were published in 2022. The results of the report are based on the responses of 2,193 bachelor’s and 392 master’s degree graduates from the 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years (42.8% and 40.1% response rate, respectively, for the two groups).



In 2022, AQU Catalunya also finished analysing the results of the survey of graduates from the 2020-2021 academic year (satisfaction 2021), which included 14,695 graduates of bachelor’s, master’s and higher arts education degrees. The project involved the 12 public and private universities in the Catalan system, 47 affiliated centres and 11 higher arts education centres.

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

In addition, the data from the 2021 degree satisfaction survey were published on the [EUC Data](#) 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 were also updated in the degree files in [EUC Studies](#).

Finally, in December 2022, fieldwork began on the eighth satisfaction survey for bachelor's degree graduates and the sixth satisfaction survey for master's degree graduates at all universities in Catalonia, both public and private, as well as the fourth survey at higher arts education centres.

### Via Universitària survey

Via Universitària is a project based on the Eurostudent survey. It aims to provide information about the profile and experience of university students in order to establish policies that fit their needs. The key factor of the project is equity, that is, ensuring that students can access and take advantage of the educational experience regardless of their social background, age, gender or any other factor.

The Vives Network of Universities is the driving force behind this project, and this is the second time that AQU Catalunya is serving as the technical director. The project is also supported by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra, the Valencian Agency for Assessment and Foresight, and the University Quality Assurance Agency of the Balearic Islands.

The analysis, carried out by six different research groups from all over the Vives territory, was completed in 2022. AQU Catalunya helped to draft the reports analysing the results, namely [Via Universitària: Accés, condicions d'aprenentatge, expectatives i retorns dels estudis universitaris \(2020-2022\)](#) [Via Universitària: Access, learning conditions, expectations and returns from university studies (2020-2022)] and [L'estudiantat universitari implicat en la governança. Breu perfil dels i les representants estudiantils](#) [University students involved in governance. A brief profile of student representatives]. Dissemination materials were also prepared for the various stakeholders and a press conference was held on 24 May 2022.

### 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.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya updated its [Programme catalogue](#), a system of hierarchical classification of university programmes and higher degrees, to [include the new Engineering and Data Science discipline](#), which is part of the field of Engineering and more specifically, the subfield of Computer Science.



## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

In addition, AQU Catalunya continued to update the data system and the different tools that make it possible to use this repository of assessment indicators. Specifically, it updated the academic indicator data from UNEIX, including data from the 2020-2021 academic year, and uploaded the satisfaction survey data for the 2020-2021 graduate cohort.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya also worked on defining and developing a new indicator to provide information on the teaching that students receive, rather than the teaching provided, as has been the case up to now. An advantage of this indicator is that it does not penalise the splitting of groups when these are carried out with pre-doctoral teaching staff.

Work also began on integrating the results of the accreditation processes into the database containing the results of the surveys and academic indicators, with a view to having the whole system of indicators fully integrated.

### 3.2. Studies and reports

AQU Catalunya is responsible for promoting knowledge generation and the provision of public information that demonstrates the state of quality and the quality assessment processes of universities and higher education centres and the services they offer, to contribute to accountability to society. For this reason, each year the Agency draws up reports based on the data it gathers from its surveys and the external degree programme, institution and teaching staff assessment processes it carries out. It produced the following reports in 2022:

#### The accreditation of doctoral programmes at Catalan universities (2018–2021)

The aim of this report was to describe the doctoral programmes offered in the Catalan university system and to analyse their status, based on the results of the first accreditation processes of these programmes, which were carried out between 2018 and 2021.

- > [\*The accreditation of doctoral programmes at Catalan universities \(2018-2021\)\*](#)

#### Internal Quality Assurance Systems Certification in the Catalan university system (2016–2021)

With regard to the reports resulting from the assessment of centres, a report on the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) Certification Programme, which has been in place since 2018 and focuses on how Catalan centres internally guarantee the quality of their degree programmes, was published in 2022.

- > [\*Internal Quality Assurance Systems Certification in the Catalan university system \(2016-2021\)\*](#)

## COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

### Report on online external review visits

In the wake of the pandemic, AQU Catalunya stopped performing in-person external visits and began carrying them out online instead. In this report, AQU Catalunya analyses how the first 100 online external visits went, drawing on the survey responses of those involved, who expressed their satisfaction with the new process and their interest in maintaining it in part in the future.

- > [Report on virtual external review visits](#)

### Associate professor profiles (2017-2019)

As a continuation of the report *Tenure-eligible lecturer profile (2013-2017)*, AQU Catalunya produced this report to analyse the CVs of those who were granted research accreditation in this period, in order to provide an indicative view of the merits required to pass the assessment.

- > [Associate professor profiles \(2017-2019\)](#)

### The gender perspective in teaching staff accreditation

AQU Catalunya carried out this study to analyse the gender perspective in teacher accreditation processes. The report analyses the assessments that the Agency had carried out over the nearly twenty years leading up to that point, which numbered in the 25,000s.

- > [The gender perspective in teaching staff accreditation](#)

### Reports on the results of the study on employment outcomes from the employer perspective

In 2022, as part of the Employers project, AQU Catalunya produced the following reports on employers' opinions regarding the education received by graduates in the fields of Communication, Pharmacy, Economics and Business, Psychology and Biosciences:

- > [Employability and university education in the field of Communication](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Pharmacy](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Economics and Business](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Psychology](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Biosciences](#)

### Report on the results of the satisfaction survey of recent higher arts education graduates

In 2022, the results of the satisfaction survey of recent graduates in higher arts education were published. The report aggregates the studies of the last three years, which refer to people who graduated in the 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years.

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> [Recent higher arts education graduates' satisfaction](#)

### Cross-sectional assessment report on the university master's degree in Educational Psychology

A working group was set up in 2022 to analyse the status of the university master's degrees in Educational Psychology taught at different Catalan universities, based on an analysis of information from the assessment processes and surveys coordinated by AQU Catalunya.

### Diagnosis on equity in access to the Catalan university system and graduates' employment outcomes

In 2022, AQU Catalunya launched a project to carry out a diagnosis of the state of equity in access to the Catalan university system and graduates' employment outcomes. The study has three specific aims:

1. Identify the indicators necessary to carry out a proper diagnosis of access and progression in the higher education system, taking into account the diversity of society, in order to ensure equity and inclusion in the system.
2. Develop a dashboard of baseline indicators of equity in access to the higher education system, based on available data, which will allow each university or centre to assess the degree to which its admissions are equitable and serve as a basis for monitoring future changes.
3. Update the 2016 study, carried out using 2015 employment outcome data, to analyse the extent to which Catalan universities continue to act as a social lift.

In the last quarter of 2022, AQU Catalunya set up a working group involving scholars and representatives of the bodies responsible for data collection (Idescat, UNE, pre-enrolment), to tackle the first aim and produce a catalogue of parameterised indicators on equity in the Catalan university system.



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### 4. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

#### 4.1. Knowledge transfer

##### EUC Portal (University Studies in Catalonia)

###### *EUC Studies*

EUC Studies disseminates the results of the quality assessment processes of the recognised bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes taught at Catalan universities, as well as the latest results of surveys on the employment outcome and satisfaction of recent graduates.

The website also displays the degrees' quality labels and the labels of centres that have been granted institutional accreditation.



The website was given a fresh design in 2022 in order to make it simpler and more user-friendly, and thus allow students and their families easier access to the information they need. The main changes were as follows:

- > The search engine was refined to make it simpler, based on the queries most relevant to students, and it was adapted to new web search trends.
- > New pages were created to search for information by area of knowledge, university, province and degree programme level.
- > The results sheet was simplified to make it more understandable for students.

Accessibility improvements were also made in 2022, bringing the website into partial compliance with European directives.

The website received 79,243 visits throughout the year (32% more than in 2021) from 59,573 users (28% more) who consulted a total of 329,914 pages (23% more).

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### *EUC Reports*

The [EUC Reports](#) website contains all the reports resulting from the quality assessment programmes carried out by the Agency on the degree programmes offered by the Catalan universities and on the higher arts education courses under the remit of the Catalan Ministry of Education. The reports can be accessed through the new EUC website.

Accessibility improvements were made in 2022, bringing the website into partial compliance with European directives.

In terms of indicators, in 2022 the website contained 7,900 reports, 14% more than in 2021, and received 5,306 visits (21% more) from 3,307 users who visited a total of 23,363 pages (35% more).

### *EUC Data*

The [EUC Data](#) website displays the results of the surveys carried out by the Agency to gather information on university graduates' employment outcomes and the satisfaction of recent graduates in relation to the degree programme they have just completed. The indicators can be consulted by area of knowledge or subarea.

The results of the latest satisfaction survey were added in 2022.

The portal received 10,159 visits during the year (40% more than in 2021) from 7,881 users (57% more) who visited a total of 39,168 pages.

### *Catalan Talent Observatory*

In 2021, AQU Catalunya and the "la Caixa" Foundation created the [Catalan Talent Observatory](#), a website that analyses jobs offered online in Catalonia. In 2022, AQU Catalunya decided to renew the website's production to provide users with information on the jobs and skills most in demand in Catalonia.



It now includes this information in an interactive display, along with other characteristics such as contract type, putting Catalonia on a par with other European countries where similar initiatives have been carried out. It 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.). In 2022, the website analysed more than **215,000** job offers.

### **Workshops and webinars**

The workshops and webinars hosted by AQU Catalunya, which are mainly aimed at the Catalan university community and Catalan government agencies, are opportunities for knowledge

## COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

exchange, reflection and discussion. The aim is to promote and reinforce the culture of quality and continuous improvement in the Catalan university system.

In 2022, the Agency hosted seven webinars. It also co-hosted a webinar with other state agencies and an on-site forum.

### **Challenges in the university education of teachers of compulsory secondary education and upper secondary education, vocational training and languages**

Webinar – 27 January 2022

AQU Catalunya co-hosted this webinar together with the state agencies of Andalusia, Aragon, Castile and Leon, the Canary Islands, the Valencian Community, Galicia and the Basque Country.

The webinar aimed to:

- > Provide an updated overview of the main challenges involved in the university education of teachers of compulsory secondary education and upper secondary education, vocational training and languages from the perspective of employers.
- > Present the opinion of employers regarding the adequacy of university education for teachers of compulsory secondary education and upper secondary education, vocational training and languages, based on a case study carried out in Catalonia.
- > Discuss specific areas for improvement in the university education of teachers of compulsory secondary education and upper secondary education, vocational training and languages, for which the participating agencies went over the general results of their assessments.

A total of 613 people signed up.

### **SMART-QUAL Policy Learning Forum**

On-site. Multi-purpose room, Jeroni Granell building, Barcelona – 20, 21 and 22 April 2022

The forum aimed to:

- > Generate and promote knowledge around internal quality assurance systems, quality indicators and their impact among project partners.
- > Discuss common problems in order to improve guidelines for the practical implementation of the Quality Indicator Scoreboard (QIS).
- > Encourage and support project participants to develop a plan for implementing a QIS in their organisations or territories.

A total of 26 people signed up.



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### *The new validation process*

Webinar – 25 April 2022

The webinar aimed to:

- > Generate and foster knowledge on the practical use of learning outcomes.
- > Present the *Standards and criteria for the quality assessment of university bachelor's and master's degrees*.
- > Present the *Guide to the validation of bachelor's and master's degree programmes*.
- > Discuss the opportunities and difficulties brought about by the new process for validating bachelor's and master's degrees.

A total of 622 people signed up.

### *Reflections on new international trends in teacher assessment: What's next?*

Webinar – 14 December 2022

The aim of this webinar, which featured two presentations, was to reflect on new approaches to research assessment. The first presentation was delivered by an international keynote speaker on the subject. The second covered the main results of a study carried out by a group of researchers on behalf of the Canarian Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ACCUEE).

A total of 559 people signed up.

### *Webinar series: "Employability and university education"*

Six of the webinars hosted by the Agency were part of a series called "Employability and university education".

These were:

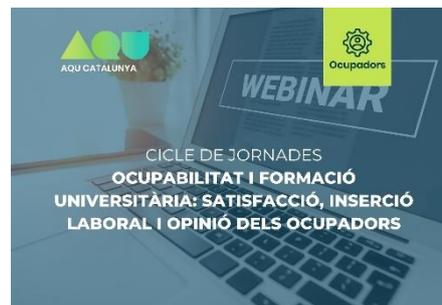
#### *Employability and university education in the field of Communication*

Webinar – 5 July 2022

A total of 85 people signed up.

#### *Employability and university education in the field of Pharmacy: satisfaction, employment outcomes and the pharmacies' opinion*

Webinar – 6 July 2022



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A total of 41 people signed up.

### *Employability and university education in the field of Economics and Business*

Webinar – 20 July 2022

A total of 105 people signed up.

### *Employability and university education in the field of Psychology*

Webinar – 17 October 2022

A total of 120 people signed up.

### *Employability and university education in the field of Biosciences*

Webinar – 15 December 2022

A total of 75 people signed up.

This webinar series aimed to:

- > Provide an updated overview of the main challenges relating to graduate employability, based on a two-sided perspective: that of graduates and the employers hiring them.
- > Present the opinion of employers regarding the adequacy of the education received by graduates in the specific field being discussed at each seminar.
- > Offer an international reflection on the direction in which professions associated with the field are heading.
- > Discuss specific areas for improvement in the university education of graduates in the analysed field.

## Publications

AQU Catalunya put out a total of 60 publications, 24 of which were original texts. Of these publications, 25 were published in Catalan, 21 in Spanish and 14 in English (see Annex 3).

Publications include those described in Section 3.2 (Studies and reports) and the methodological documents described in Section 1.4 (Methodology). AQU Catalunya also published the *Guide to ex-ante accreditation of joint programmes using the European Approach* and the *Guide to the assessment of foreign centres*.

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Finally, it published the *AQU Catalunya Activities and Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2021*.

### 4.2. Communication tools

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

#### Website

AQU Catalunya's corporate website is the main tool it uses to communicate its activities.

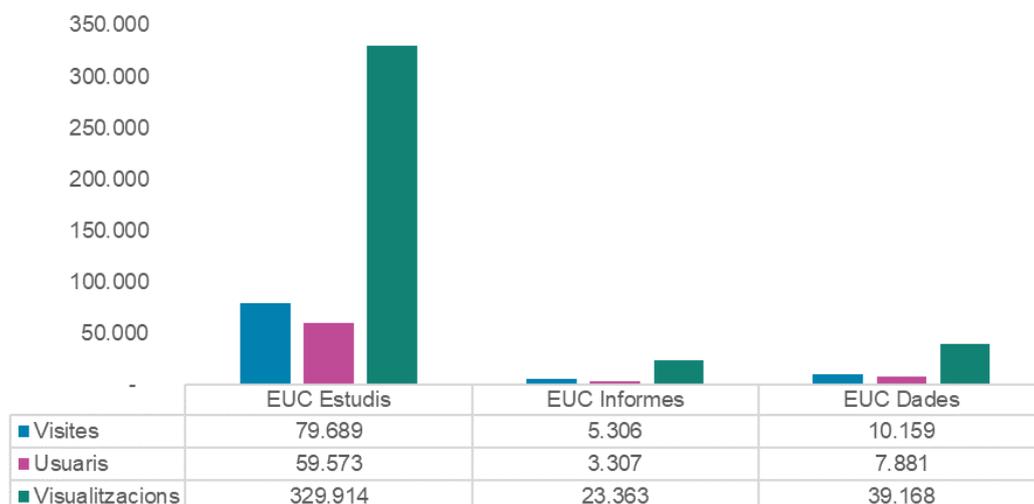
In 2022, it continued to review and update the content and structure of the main pages, in order to improve both the user experience and access to information. Work was also done to analyse and develop accessibility improvements so as to achieve compliance with European directives.

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.

As regards traffic indicators for the corporate website, due to an incident with the page markings, the view, visit and user metrics were not recorded during the second half of the year. However, an analysis of the data collected from 1 January to 9 June shows a trend tracking similarly from the year before. The website was consulted by 45,787 users, received 88,714 visits and had 275,229 views.

For the rest of the Agency's websites, the number of visits, users and views were as follows:

Figure 9. Number of visits, users and views on AQU Catalunya websites (2022)



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### elButlletí

The four annual issues of *elButlletí* (104 to 107) were published. This is a regular publication put out by AQU Catalunya to provide further information on the organisation's activities and projects and to express the opinions of the people involved.

The issues were sent to the newsletter's 17,285 subscribers, which is 14% more subscribers than in 2021.



### Twitter

AQU Catalunya has a corporate Twitter account that it uses to post more directly about its activities, and also to share information from other agencies and organisations related to quality in higher education, employment outcomes and other issues considered of interest to followers. Twitter is used to reinforce and expand on the information disseminated through the institutional website.



By the end of 2022, AQU Catalunya's Twitter account had 2,732 followers (10% more than at the end of 2021) and had tweeted 835 times. Moreover, @aqucatalunya was mentioned 656 times and the profile received some 30,600 visits, an increase of more than 50%.

### YouTube

AQU Catalunya has a channel on YouTube that it uses to disseminate its activities and, where necessary, to train experts. This channel has also been used to live-stream webinars.

In 2022, the Agency uploaded 16 videos to its YouTube channel.

The number of times AQU Catalunya videos were viewed on its channel continued to grow this year, with an increase of 11% compared to 2021. Specifically, the videos had 12,750 views in 2022, bringing the cumulative total to 46,324.

The most viewed video was [Tutorial per emplenar la sol·licitud d'avaluació i el curriculum vitae abreujat](#) [Tutorial on how to fill in the application for assessment and the short CV], posted on 21 January, with 2,459 views. In second place was [El nou procés de verificació](#) [The new validation process], a webinar that took place on 25 April, with 1,620 views. Finally, the third most viewed video was [Reflexions al voltant de les noves tendències internacionals d'avaluació del professorat](#) [Reflections on new international trends in teacher assessment], also a live-streamed webinar, which went up on 14 December, with 1,162 views.

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### LinkedIn

AQU Catalunya has an account on LinkedIn where it posts about the results of its studies and some of its projects.

The account has 587 followers, 67% more than in 2021. The Agency posted 13 times to the platform, and had 1,506 page views, 127% more than the year before.



### The media

In 2022, AQU Catalunya was cited 39 times in the print media, three more than in 2021.

### Corporate image

In 2022, AQU Catalunya renewed the design of its quality labels to bring them into line with the corporate image updated in 2021. The range of seals was also extended to accommodate new assessment processes, such as short learning programmes. Quality labels distinguish degrees and institutions that have passed an external review carried out by the Agency.





# COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

## 5. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

### 5.1. Strategic management

#### Assessment according to European standards and guidelines

If quality assurance agencies operating in Europe want their decisions to be recognised by other European countries, they must pass an external review every five years to verify that their assessment processes are in compliance with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG, 2015\)](#).

Work continued in 2022 to implement the recommendations for improvement from the 2017 review, and the international external review of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) was carried out in the form of a targeted review. The outcome of the external review was positive, meaning that AQU Catalunya will remain on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) until June 2027 and maintain its status as a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

#### Strategic Plan

AQU Catalunya completed its [2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#) in 2022. Overall compliance was slightly lower (76%) than for previous strategic plans, as some activities could not be carried out or had to be postponed due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AQU Catalunya also drew up its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. For this, it drew on its experience with previous plans and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) document it had prepared based on the input gathered in surveys with university managers, external experts and Agency staff.

The strategic goals and actions in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan were defined by setting up nine working groups of in-house staff, which held in-depth discussions from October to December 2022 on different aspects highlighted in the SWOT analysis. The document also introduced the considerations of the AQU Catalunya Advisory Commission.

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The proposed Strategic Plan was submitted to internal and external stakeholder consultation.

### 5.2. Governing, review and advisory bodies

AQU Catalunya adopted its agreements through the relevant governing and review bodies: the Governing Board and Standing Commission, the Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP), the Research Assessment Commission and the Appeals Commission. The Agency also received input from the advisory bodies, including the Advisory Commission, the Committee of Vice-Rectors for Quality and Academic Organisation, the University Councils and the Representatives of Private Universities Committee, the Committee of Heads of Technical Quality Units, the Technical Committee for Surveys and the Student Advisory Committee.

The Appeals Commission, which met seven times in 2022, continued to issue review reports on the minutes agreed by the assessment commissions and handled appeals concerning university teaching staff assessment processes. It has also pushed for a technical legislative change in the system for renewing Commission members.

The AQU Catalunya Governing Board met three times, twice in person and once online. The Governing Board also discussed the research and assessment of teaching staff, and the preliminary draft of the Organic Law on the University System.

### 5.3. Expert assessment staff

Experts are people of recognised academic and/or professional prestige, as well as students, who take part in AQU Catalunya's assessment processes. They must be independent and objective and have no conflicts of interest. They must also meet the ability and merit requirements previously established by the assessment commissions.

In order to promote the inclusion of students in the pool of reviewers, a communication campaign was designed to encourage their participation: "[Students, help us improve the quality of university degree programmes!](#)".

Moreover, a collaboration agreement was signed with the European Students' Union (ESU) to regulate the participation of international students as experts in the quality assurance processes organised by AQU Catalunya. This agreement aims to bring an international perspective to the assessment processes.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya's pool of reviewers received 349 new CVs: 135 from people in academia, 173 students and 41 professionals.

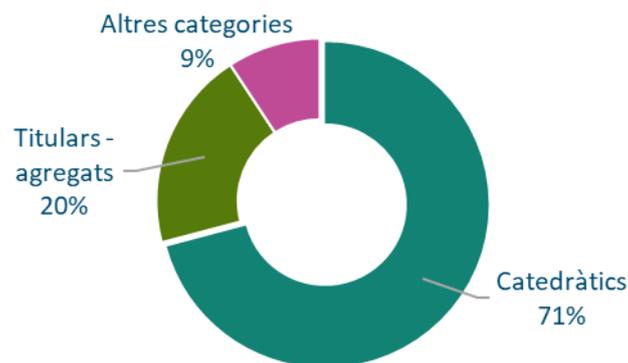


## COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

This year, 837 experts<sup>12</sup> took part in AQU Catalunya's activities, of whom 484 took part in the institutional and degree programme assessment processes and 380 in the faculty assessment processes.

The gender distribution was 55% men and 45% women, which means that gender parity was maintained in the review committees. Fifty-two per cent of the external experts came from outside the Catalan university system. More than two thirds of the academic experts were full professors.

Figure 10. Experts by academic category (2022)



In 2022 all new experts received specific in-person or online training prior to their participation in the assessment processes.

## 6. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

AQU Catalunya was **accountable** and transparent in its actions in 2022. It also engaged in a high level of **legal activity**, with the drafting of agreements, reports, resolutions and edicts to ensure that its activities ran smoothly, as well as participating in the relevant administrative procurement procedures.

AQU Catalunya kept its **quality management and information security system** up and running throughout the year. It also passed an external certification audit carried out by AENOR in accordance with the ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 27001:2013 standards.

In the area of **information and communication technologies**, AQU Catalunya implemented Talassa, a unified system for managing the Quality Assurance Department's assessment files. It developed Nostrum, a new expert and commission manager featuring updated components and graphic and functional improvements. It migrated all its application and appeal forms to HTML5 and the new environment set out in the Gencat platform for services and procedures (GSIT). With regard to EUC Studies, it developed and implemented a new version of the website with improved graphics; made efforts to improve the automatic presentation of labels, certificates and accreditation results; and

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<sup>12</sup> An expert can participate in both types of assessment.

## COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

continued to work alongside the Ministry of Research and Universities to set up automatic data exchange between the two parties. It made ongoing improvements to the in-house Venus platform. It designed and implemented a process for operating the public website to reflect the best practices of the Catalan university system. It developed and implemented new automatic indicators, especially in the area of quality assessment. It continually improved and extended the features of the various modules of Nexus and the AQU Catalunya extranet, in order to better manage its activities and facilitate the assessment carried out by experts. It complied with the controls specified in the ISO 27002 standard on information security and handled 816 requests made using the computer applications and systems mailboxes.

With respect to **budget and account management**, the financial year 2022 began with the budget that had been approved by the Governing Board on 14 July 2021 and subsequently ratified in Law 1/2021, of 29 December, on the budget of the Generalitat de Catalunya for 2022. It is worth noting that the financial year ended with a balanced budget, specifically with a budget out-turn of €64,565.86. This balance was achieved due to the reduction in expenditure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as both institutional and teaching staff assessment processes continued to be carried out mostly online. The Agency implemented the Captio application for settling expenses, and finished integrating the GEEC administrative procurement tool and the Pangea accounting application.

AQU Catalunya regularly submitted its accounts to the Directorate General for Financial Policy, the Public Accounts Department, the Directorate General for Universities and the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Economy and Knowledge, as well as to the Court of Auditors.

Finally, AQU Catalunya's ledger, the official ledger of the Administration, had 16% more entries than in 2021.



# COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

## 7. RELATIONS WITH SOCIAL PARTNERS IN CATALONIA

Within the Catalan higher education system, AQU Catalunya maintains relations mainly with:

- > The Ministry of Universities and Research, with which it took part in the 1 February meeting of the Catalan Agreement on the Knowledge Society monitoring commission.
- > The Interuniversity Council of Catalonia (CIC), where it is involved in the Commission for Academic Programming and Governance, the Academic Staff Commission, the Women and Science Commission and the General Conference. It is also part of the 2030 Agenda working group. In addition, in 2022 AQU Catalunya was a member of the Assessment Commission for the M. Encarna Sanahuja Yll Mention, and the Margalida Comas Programme working subgroup.
- > The universities of Catalonia, whose requests it handles
- > Networks such as the Catalan University Service Consortium, the Vives Network, the Catalan Association of Public Universities and the TECNIO Network.
- > The Catalan universities' student councils.

AQU Catalunya also maintains relations with various bodies in certain Catalan government ministries:

- > The Ministry of Education, to coordinate the assessment and improvement of higher arts education.
- > The Ministry of Health, to disseminate the employer survey in healthcare facilities.
- > The Statistical Institute of Catalonia, to include questions related to the employability of graduates in its survey on the business climate.
- > The Interuniversity Council of Catalonia's Working Group for the Improvement of Nursing Education.

## COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

Finally, it maintains relations with social partners. For the Employers project, AQU Catalunya has teamed up with the “la Caixa” Foundation, which is funding the project, and with the organisations listed on the project website, which include professional associations and chambers of commerce, in order to disseminate the survey and, in some cases, design the questionnaire for some of the specific sectors included in the study.

# 8. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

## 8.1. Relations with the State

AQU Catalunya is a founding member of the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU). This network held eight online meetings and two in-person meetings: one in Madrid and another in Santiago de Compostela.

The Agency also maintained fluid relations with the Spanish quality assurance agencies and other state bodies. AQU Catalunya co-hosted a webinar on the challenges of university education for teachers together with the agencies of Andalusia, Aragon, Castile and Leon, the Canary Islands, the Basque Country and Galicia. In addition, with support from the Canary Islands agency, it hosted a seminar to reflect on new international trends in teacher assessment.

AQU Catalunya also held a meeting with the Spanish Coordinator of Student Representatives of Public Universities (CREUP), the state coordination body for university students.

Agreements with state bodies:

### Agreement with the University of Navarra

AQU Catalunya signed an agreement with the University of Navarra for accrediting the advanced research performed by the university's teaching staff. A total of 20 applications for accreditation were submitted under this agreement.

### Agreement with the Valencian Agency for Assessment and Foresight

AQU Catalunya signed a collaboration agreement with the Valencian Agency for Assessment and Foresight to carry out a study on the employment outcomes of graduates of bachelor's degrees in Environmental Sciences. The study will involve the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the University of Valencia and the Miguel Hernández University of Elche on the Valencian side, and the University of Barcelona, the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the University of Girona on the Catalan side.

### Agreement with the University Quality Assurance Agency of the Balearic Islands

AQU Catalunya signed an agreement with the University Quality Assurance Agency of the Balearic Islands to provide consultancy services for the validation of curricula of higher arts education courses taught in the Balearic Islands. The master's degree in Responsible Design in Tourist

## COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

Environments, taught at the Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de les Illes Balears (EASDIB), was assessed in the 2021 call for validation, and the final validation report was issued in 2022.

# 9. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

## 9.1. International institutional relations

Below are the main international organisations with which AQU Catalunya maintains institutional relations:

### INQAAHE

The [International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education](#) (INQAAHE) is an international association of more than 300 organisations working in quality assurance in higher education, most of which are quality assurance agencies.



AQU Catalunya has been a member of this network since 1998 and served as its secretariat from October 2013 to 2021. In February 2022, Barcelona was effectively made the permanent location for the INQAAHE secretariat.

AQU Catalunya is a member of the Board of Directors of INQAAHE through Anna Prades, head of the Internationalisation and Knowledge Management Department, who was appointed treasurer on 20 October 2021 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. As part of this network, AQU Catalunya takes part in a number of activities, including the drafting of the International Standards and Guidelines.

### ENQA

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



The Agency attended last year's ENQA Members' Forum, which took place in Cardiff, United Kingdom, from 22 to 24 April 2022. The event served as an opportunity to discuss topics such as the inclusion of core values into the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), international cooperation, the quality assurance of micro-credentials and the quality assurance of European university partnerships. It also attended the General Assembly, held on 27 and 28 October in Stockholm, Sweden. The gathering was used to discuss the quality of e-learning and the updates that should be made to the ESG in its next revision. Moreover, AQU Catalunya has played an active role in reviewing the [2018 document](#) on the quality assurance of e-learning and in the working group on the quality assurance of micro-credentials.

## COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

Esther Huertas has been a member of the ENQA Agency Review Committee since 2021, and Núria Comet has been a member of the ENQA Appeals and Complaints Committee since 2020.

### EQAR

To be eligible for inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), agencies must undergo an international external review to demonstrate their compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. AQU

Catalunya has been registered on the EQAR since 4 March 2008, making it one of the first three agencies to be included.



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. Throughout 2022, AQU Catalunya remained diligent in uploading reports from the assessment processes under its framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees, and its reports on the certification of quality assurance systems and institutional accreditation. It also uploaded the European Approach reports, the teaching assessment handbooks and the reports on ex-ante accreditation of short learning programmes, in order to broaden the range of reports made public through this database.

In 2022 the DEQAR contained more than 4,100 reports issued by AQU Catalunya.

## 9.2. International projects and assessments and exchange

### International projects

AQU Catalunya carries out its activities following international benchmarks and promotes joint actions with higher education institutions and other national and international agencies and organisations. Below are the international projects in which the Agency was involved in 2022:

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

In 2022, AQU Catalunya, together with other agencies (Lithuania's Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education [SKVC] and Portugal's Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior [A3ES]) and universities (Portugal's Universidade do Minho and Universidade de Aveiro; Belgium's Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Italy's Politecnico di Torino; and Spain's International University of Catalonia), continued to carry out the project known as Structured indicators to manage HEI Quality System (SMART-QUAL), which is funded by the Erasmus+ programme [Key Action 2] and coordinated by CONEXX-EU in Belgium.

## COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

An event for internal discussion and training among all project partners was coordinated and held in Barcelona in April 2022. In order to disseminate the results, a multiplier event was held in Brussels on 13 October, drawing 66 attendees.

The project partners have developed the following products:

- > The [Quality Indicator Scoreboard \(QIS\)](#), a tool and reference framework for developing and harmonising internal quality assurance systems internationally. It is based on an analysis of the most common and relevant indicators for 36 higher education institutions in five countries and 39 specialised bibliographic resources.
- > The [QIS Implementation Guidelines](#), aimed at European higher education institutions.
- > A [wiki](#) for consulting the indicators identified in the QIS.

### *Employability in Programme Development (EPD) (ongoing, started in 2020)*

The Employability in Programme Development (EPD) project aims to establish a feedback loop between the job market and higher education institutions, in order to inform programme and course design and thus improve graduate employability. The project's target group is teaching staff, as the goal is to mainstream employability through changes in teaching practice. In order to keep academic staff abreast of the project's developments, intermediate units supporting the academic community (employment services, quality units, labour research institutes, etc.) will be involved.

The project partners are: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Autonomous University of Barcelona, University of Reading, University of Glasgow and AQU Catalunya.

In 2022, the EPD project partners worked on the development of a portfolio of best teaching practices for boosting graduate employability, collected data on the employer community through a pilot survey, organised focus groups with employers in all participating regions to understand their skills needs and the areas of education where graduates need to improve, and started programming the dashboard using data from AQU Catalunya.

### *Complex Trajectories (Complex) (ongoing, 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 regard, it intends to analyse trajectories from the students' perspective, rather than focusing on programme indicators (e.g. graduation rates).

The project partners are: Open University of Catalonia, Autonomous University of Barcelona, University of Valencia, University of Burgundy, Open University, University of Alberta, University of Porto and the Catalan Ministry of Research and Universities. AQU Catalunya is an associate partner.

In 2022, work was done to define the concept of "complex trajectory" and the methodology for its analysis. This methodology was applied to the available data, yielding some preliminary results.

## COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

Work was also carried out to develop a best practice guide for tutors and academic managers to support students who choose complex trajectories.

### International reviews

#### *Assessment of foreign institutions in Catalonia*

In accordance with the Law on Universities in Catalonia, teaching institutions wishing to offer courses leading to degrees awarded by institutions in other countries must be assessed by the Agency before being authorised by the Catalan ministry responsible for universities.

AQU Catalunya has had a methodology in place to assess these centres since 2016. In 2022, AQU Catalunya updated its *Guide to the assessment of institutions offering foreign degree programmes in Catalonia* with the twofold aim of adapting it to the requirements of the new Royal Decree 640/2021 and harmonising it with the institutional assessment processes followed by the other university institutions in Catalonia.

As far as actual assessments are concerned, the [European Business School](#) was assessed in 2022 and issued a favourable report, and the Sant Cugat Business School (ESN) was also assessed, although its report is still pending.

### Exchanges

AQU Catalunya actively participated in meetings, forums and projects that were deemed to add value to the Catalan university system as a whole, and which allow the Agency to learn about and disseminate activities in the international arena, in order to keep abreast of developments in the field of quality. Specifically, the Agency delivered 16 presentations at international meetings (see Annex 2).

Of these presentations, ten took place at international conferences, four were given as part of international projects in which AQU Catalunya collaborates, and two were given in the framework of working groups in which the Agency participates.



# COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEES

## 10. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

### 10.1. Human resources

As of 31 December 2022, the Agency's staff consists of 54 people – 40 women and 14 men – including the director. The average age is 47.86 years. Of the Agency's employees, 39 are on permanent contracts, seven are on interim contracts pending permanent recruitment, one is on an interim replacement contract and six are on temporary contracts for works and services. Among the staff, 67.92% perform technical work.

By implementing job stabilisation processes, the Agency reduced temporary employment by 17% in 2022, as compared to 2020.

#### Remote work

During the first half of 2022, the AQU Catalunya Remote Work Agreement, which regulates remote work at the Agency, was negotiated with staff representatives. This agreement was approved by both parties on 23 June 2022 and by the AQU Catalunya Governing Board on 15 July 2022, and was implemented as of the last quarter of 2022.

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

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