



AQU CATALUNYA SELF- ASSESSMENT REPORT 2026

External review 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

The [Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#) (AQU Catalunya) was established in 1996 as Spain's first external quality assurance agency for higher education. In 2026, it is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Building on a long and well-established track record, AQU Catalunya is now a mature institution operating primarily within the Catalan Higher Education System. It also maintains active and sustained international engagement through participation in specialised networks, forums and associations, as well as international projects. This enables it to compare methodologies, share good practice and contribute to emerging debates on quality assurance in higher education.

As part of the external review process against the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG 2015), AQU Catalunya has undergone four external reviews coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA): full reviews in 2007, 2012 and 2017, and a targeted review in 2022.

This self-assessment report examines AQU Catalunya's compliance with the ESG during the review period (2022–2026) and provides evidence that its quality assurance activities and processes meet these standards. It is also intended to serve as a tool for reflection, helping to guide the Agency's actions over the next five years. One of its main challenges during this time will be to adapt its activities to the revised ESG.

The purpose of this review is to renew AQU Catalunya's Membership of ENQA and maintain its inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The review period has been characterised by new developments in national regulations, requiring both AQU Catalunya and the Spanish university system as a whole to update their practices. It also saw the approval, in 2025, of the [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System](#) (QUALINS Framework), which provides the framework for quality assurance processes in the next review period.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

This self-assessment report was prepared exclusively by staff at AQU Catalunya, which appointed an internal drafting team specifically for this purpose. This team had the following members:

- > Maria Giné Soca, AQU Catalunya Secretary
- > Esther Huertas Hidalgo, Head of the Quality Assurance Department
- > Anna Prades Nebot, Head of the Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department
- > Núria Comet Señal, Project Manager and Head of Internal Quality Assurance

The report was prepared in the following stages:

Table 1. Timeline and stages in the preparation of the self-assessment report

Months (2026)	Activities
January–February	Planning of the self-assessment report and identification of the main issues to be addressed
March–May	Preparation of the self-assessment report
May–June	Internal and external consultation of the self-assessment report
July	Approval by the AQU Catalunya Governing Board and translation into English

Source: AQU Catalunya

The following stakeholders took part in the review process:

- > AQU Catalunya staff.
- > Members of AQU Catalunya's review commissions and specific review commissions.
- > Members of AQU Catalunya's advisory commissions.
- > The Catalan universities, through the offices of their vice rectors for quality and their technical quality units.
- > The Government of Catalonia, through the Ministry of Research and Universities and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

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The following points should be noted regarding the preparation of this self-assessment report:

- > The original language of the report is Catalan.
- > Data relating to 2026 included in this self-assessment report are current as of 31 May 2026.
- > During the drafting of the original report, an artificial intelligence tool (Copilot) was used for language editing, including spelling and grammar correction, stylistic refinement and clearer wording. The content and final version of the report were reviewed and validated by the internal drafting team.
- > Some evidence was translated using artificial intelligence tools such as Microsoft Word. In all such cases, the documents include a note indicating this.
- > The final version of the self-assessment report was translated into English by a specialised translation company. The translation was then reviewed and validated by the internal drafting team.
- > Hyperlinks are shown in light blue and underlined.
- > Some documents that are not available on AQU Catalunya's corporate website are accessible via the Agency's cloud storage and can be downloaded from there. These links will be deactivated once the review process has been completed.
- > The source is provided for all evidence included in the self-assessment report (tables, figures, etc.).
- > AQU Catalunya did not engage any external company or consulting firm to support the preparation of this self-assessment report.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF AQU CATALUNYA

AQU Catalunya is responsible for the external review of higher education in Catalonia under the current legal framework. This encompasses:

- > The Catalan Higher Education System, which falls within the remit of the Ministry of Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia.
- > Arts higher education institutions, which fall within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of the Government of Catalonia.

Catalonia may also establish higher education institutions offering cross-border programmes leading to qualifications awarded by foreign institutions that are not recognised as official qualifications in Catalonia. AQU Catalunya undertakes these reviews at the request of the Government of Catalonia, in response to the applications submitted.

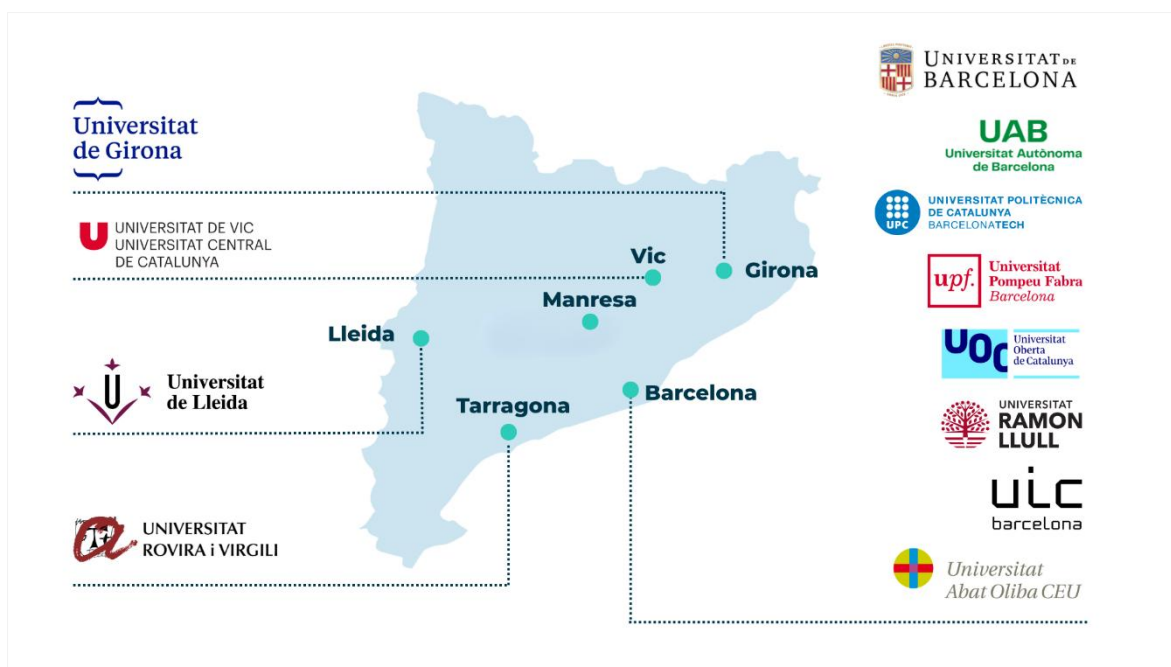
3.1. The Catalan Higher Education System

The Catalan Higher Education System is regulated by [Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the Higher Education System](#) [ES] and [Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities](#).

The system comprises twelve universities, seven of which are public and five private. The public universities are: Universitat de Barcelona (UB, 1450), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB, 1968), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC, 1971), Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF, 1990), Universitat de Girona (UdG, 1992), Universitat de Lleida (UdL, 1992) and Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV, 1992) in Tarragona.

The private universities are: Universitat Ramon Llull (URL, 1991), Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC, 1995), which provides distance education, Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC, 1997), Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC, 1997) and Universitat Abat Oliba CEU (UAO, 2003).

Figure 1. Map of the Catalan Higher Education System



Source: AQU Catalunya

The figures below illustrate the size of the Catalan Higher Education System:

Table 2. Size of the Catalan Higher Education System, 2024/2025 academic year

University	Students	Teaching staff ¹	Bachelor's degree programmes	Master's degree programmes	PhD programmes
UB	54,216	6,613	73	148	45
UAB	41,909	5,028	89	108	63
UPC	33,103	3,352	63	91	54
UPF	19,855	1,991	39	71	9
UdG	15,696	1,969	52	33	11
UdL	12,887	1,752	40	43	11
URV	18,081	2,455	46	45	22
UOC	77,344	469	25	51	7
URL	18,952	2,011	50	64	12

¹ Data for the 2024/2025 academic year.

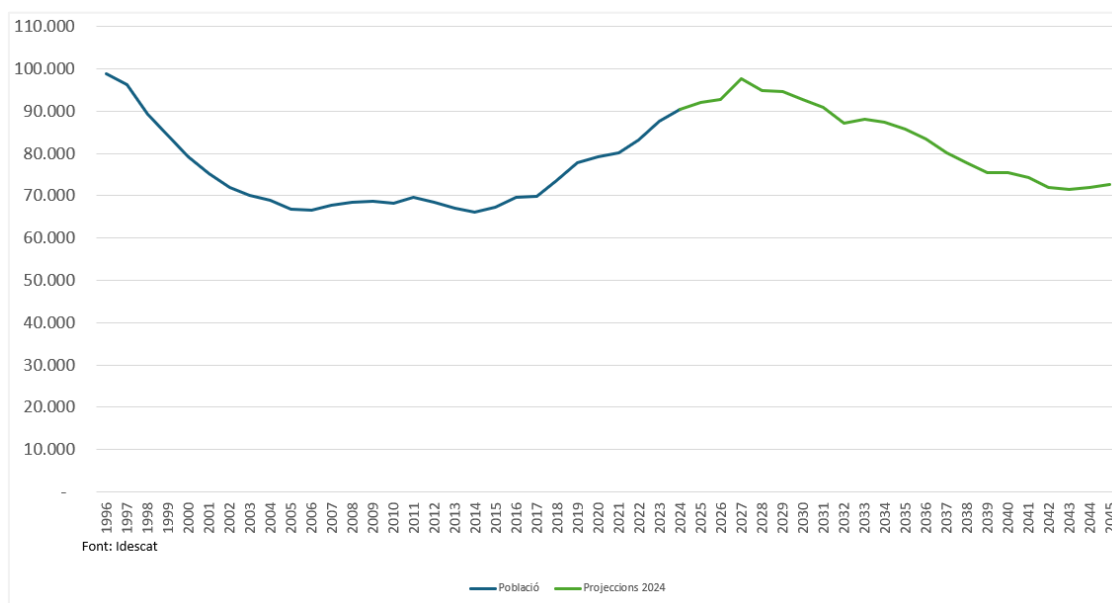
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University	Students	Teaching staff ¹	Bachelor's degree programmes	Master's degree programmes	PhD programmes
UVic-UCC	13,008	1,715	42	15	7
UIC	5,692	562	16	24	4
UAO	2,902	347	15	11	4
Total	313,645	28,264	550	704	249

Source: UNEIX information system (student and teaching staff headcount) and Official Register of Catalonia (number of degree programmes)

The graph below shows population projections up to 2040. As can be seen, the population of 18-year-olds in Catalonia – the typical age of entry to university – is projected to peak in 2027 before declining, although it is not expected to fall to 2015 levels.

Graph 1. Population aged 18 in Catalonia: trends and projections (medium scenario)



Source: Idescat – Statistical Institute of Catalonia

Admission to Catalonia's public universities is managed through a centralised admissions system coordinated by the Government of Catalonia. In the 2024/2025 academic year, 85% of students enrolling at these universities were admitted through the university entrance examinations (70% from upper secondary education and 15% from higher vocational education and training programmes), while the remainder entered through other, less common routes.

3.2. Arts higher education

Arts higher education institutions are regulated by [Law 1/2024, of 7 June, governing arts higher education and establishing the organisation and equivalence of professional arts education](#) [ES]. There are currently five public and seven private institutions in Catalonia authorised to offer bachelor's and master's degrees in arts higher education equivalent to university qualifications. AQU Catalunya acts as the external quality assurance agency under an agreement with the Catalan Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Figure 2. Map of arts higher education in Catalonia



Source: AQU Catalunya

The figures below illustrate the size of institutions offering arts higher education:

Table 3. Size of arts higher education institutions, 2024/2025 academic year

Institution	Public/Private	Students	Bachelor's degree programmes	Master's degree programmes
Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC)	Public	1,266	1	6
Escola Superior de Música LICEU	Private	796	1	5
Escola Superior de Música Taller de Músics	Private	213	1	0
Escola Superior de Música Jam Session	Private	44	1	0

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Institution	Public/Private	Students	Bachelor's degree programmes	Master's degree programmes
Escola Superior de Música EUMES	Private	N/A (not yet started)	1	0
Escola Superior de Conservació i Restauració de Béns Culturals de Catalunya (ESCRBCC)	Public	178	1	2
Escola Superior d'Art Dramàtic – Institut del Teatre	Public	299	1	0
Conservatori Superior de Dansa – Institut del Teatre	Public	114	1	0
Escola Superior d'Art Dramàtic – Eolia	Private	179	1	0
Escola Superior de Disseny i Arts Plàstiques de Catalunya (ESDAPC)	Public	900	1	1
Escola Superior de Disseny LCI	Private	699	1	2
Centre Superior de Disseny IED	Private	560	1	1
Total		5,248	12	17

Source: Catalan Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. (Student headcount)

3.3. Institutions offering cross-border education

Cross-border programmes constitute a form of internationalised higher education. Under [Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities](#), the ministry for universities authorises educational institutions wishing to offer programmes leading to qualifications awarded by foreign institutions that are not recognised as equivalent to official qualifications in Catalonia. [Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July](#) [ES] and [Royal Decree 905/2025](#) [ES] further establish that this authorisation is a prerequisite for offering higher education programmes. As part of the authorisation process, institutions must obtain a favourable preliminary report from AQU Catalunya. During the review period, four educational institutions offering qualifications awarded by institutions outside Spain were authorised. Cross-border education has a minimal impact on the Agency's overall activities, considering that, on average, around 75 external review visits are organised each year and only one of them relates to cross-border education.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF AQU CATALUNYA

4.1. Quality assurance in Catalonia

Since its establishment 30 years ago, AQU Catalunya has worked to assure and enhance the quality of degree programmes and higher education institutions within the Catalan Higher Education System. In 2010, it adopted a quality assurance system based on frameworks² aligned with the ESG. The involvement of universities, students and experts in developing these frameworks, together with their approval by the Agency's highest governing body, the Governing Board, reflects a shared approach to quality founded on consensus, trust and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Between 2010 and 2025, AQU Catalunya operated under the *Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees* (MVSMA Framework).

In 2025, the Agency approved the [*Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System*](#) (QUALINS Framework). Replacing its predecessor, the QUALINS Framework now underpins quality assurance in the Catalan Higher Education System. It promotes university autonomy and places greater emphasis on external quality assurance at the institutional level, while taking account of developments across the European Higher Education Area. The QUALINS Framework is built around three key features. First, it establishes cycles for institutional accreditation. Second, it aligns the external quality assurance processes for degree programmes with those cycles. Finally, it introduces the concept of the self-accredited institution, which applies to higher education institutions that have renewed their institutional accreditation.

The QUALINS Framework has been developed in line with the principle that has guided AQU Catalunya's approach to assuring the quality of degree programmes and the institutions that offer them: continuous improvement. This means that both degree programmes and higher education institutions are expected to improve progressively as they move through successive stages of the review cycle.

² Within AQU Catalunya, a framework provides a structured approach to organising and ensuring consistency across institutional and programme review processes.

4.2. Main stakeholders and their interconnecting roles

The following stakeholders operate within the Catalan Higher Education System:

- > Catalan higher education institutions, which design degree programmes and have primary responsibility for ensuring their quality.
- > AQU Catalunya, which is responsible for the external quality assurance of degree programmes and higher education institutions in Catalonia.
- > The Government of Catalonia, which authorises the establishment of recognised degree programmes and new higher education institutions in Catalonia.
- > The Council of Universities and the Arts Higher Education Council, which verify and accredit degree programmes and higher education institutions.

Spain's external quality assurance agencies coordinate their work through the Spanish Network of University Quality Assurance Agencies (REACU) to ensure the consistent application of national legislation. These stakeholders all interact to safeguard the quality of degree programmes and the institutions that offer them.

4.3. Regulatory developments (2022–2026)

Since 2021, the regulatory framework governing higher education has undergone substantial reform, directly affecting several areas of AQU Catalunya's work, including higher education organisation, quality assurance, the establishment and oversight of universities and other higher education institutions, and the assessment of teaching staff at this level. These changes have placed the Catalan Higher Education System in a process of continuous adaptation, requiring the Agency to devote significant resources to analysing the new legislation and planning its implementation. The legislation introduced and implemented since 2022 is summarised below:

Table 4. Legislation introduced and implemented between 2022 and 2026, by date of approval

Legislation	Area
Royal Decree 640/2021 of 27 July [ES]	Institutional quality assurance
Royal Decree 822/2021 of 28 September [ES]	Programme quality assurance
Organic Law 2/2023 of 22 March [ES]	Higher education system: degree programmes and institutions
Royal Decree 576/2023 of 4 July [ES]	Doctoral programme quality assurance
Law 1/2024 of 7 June [ES]	Arts higher education

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Legislation	Area
Royal Decree 611/2025 of 8 July [ES]	Arts higher education
Royal Decree 905/2025 of 7 October [ES]	Institutional and programme quality assurance

Source: AQU Catalunya

5. HISTORY, PROFILE AND STRUCTURE OF AQU CATALUNYA

5.1. History

AQU Catalunya was established in 1996 by Decree 355/1996 of 29 October as a consortium of Catalonia's public universities and the Government of Catalonia. It was the first quality assurance agency in Spain and one of the first in Europe. The consortium's governance model was distinctive in that the Catalan public universities became members of its Governing Board from the outset, creating an unprecedented model of shared governance based on mutual trust, institutional co-responsibility and a collective commitment to continuous improvement.

That governance model was met with consensus and has remained in place ever since. However, it has evolved to include a wider range of stakeholders. Following the adoption of [Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities](#), the former consortium was renamed the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency, as it is known today. The 2003 legislation also extended representation on the Governing Board to private universities, which had previously been excluded. The most recent legislative reform came in 2015, when the Parliament of Catalonia passed [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#) in response to the recommendations arising from the ENQA-coordinated external reviews against the ESG conducted in 2007 and 2012. The new legislation guarantees the Agency's organisational independence from the Government of Catalonia, strengthens procedural safeguards through the establishment of an independent Appeals Commission, and provides greater flexibility in both its organisational structure and its functions. AQU Catalunya operates in accordance with its Statute, approved by [Decree 315/2016 of 8 November](#).

AQU Catalunya has been a member of [ENQA](#) since 2000, has been listed on [EQAR](#) since 2008, has been a member of [INQAAHE](#) since 1998,³ was a founding member of [REACU](#) in 2006, was recognised by the [WFME](#) in 2021, and joined [GAIN](#) in 2024. In relation to its teaching staff assessment activities, which are specific to Spanish quality assurance agencies, AQU Catalunya became a signatory to [DORA](#) in 2020 and joined [CoARA](#) in 2022. The Agency is certified to the ISO 9001 quality management standard (since 2000) and the ISO 27001 information security management standard (since 2015).

³ Between 2013 and 2021, AQU Catalunya hosted the INQAAHE Secretariat. Since November 2021, it has provided logistical support to INQAAHE Secretariat.

5.2. Purpose

Article 2 of [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#) defines AQU Catalunya's purpose as follows: *"The purpose of Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya is to promote and assure the quality of higher education in line with European and international academic and social quality standards and pursuant to current regulations. Its aim is also to provide higher education agents with criteria and benchmarks in order to attain the utmost standards of quality in the fulfilment of their duties, taking into consideration society's interest in benefitting from higher education of excellence."*

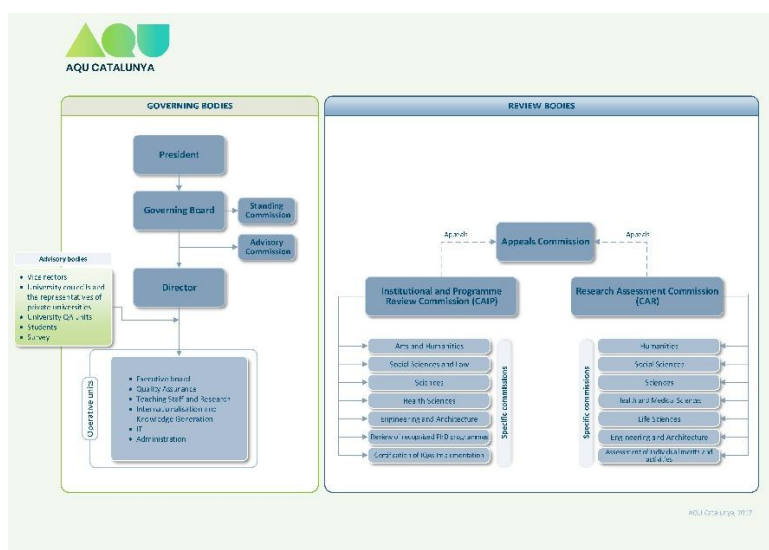
5.3. AQU Catalunya: organisation, structure and governance

[Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#) clearly distinguishes between two types of bodies within the Agency: governing bodies and review bodies. It also provides for the establishment of advisory bodies and review committees. The responsibilities of each are clearly defined, and the technical and professional independence of the review commissions and committees is guaranteed at all times. Further information on the Agency's independence is provided in Section 7.3, ESG Standard 3.3, of this report.

AQU Catalunya's staff are organised into departments and provide the support required for the governing bodies, review bodies and advisory bodies to carry out their duties.

The following section outlines AQU Catalunya's organisational structure, which is also available on the Agency's website: [AQU Catalunya's organisational structure](#).

Figure 3. AQU Catalunya's organisational structure



Source: AQU Catalunya

5.3.1. Governing bodies

President. The president of AQU Catalunya, who also serves as chair of the Governing Board and its Standing Commission, is the Agency's institutional representative. The president is appointed by the Government of Catalonia, on the proposal of the minister for universities, from among individuals of recognised standing and distinction in the academic community with proven experience in higher education quality assurance and research. The appointment is for a four-year term and may be renewed once.

Governing Board. The Governing Board is AQU Catalunya's highest governing body. It oversees the Agency's operations and approves its programme of activities, policies and strategic objectives, as well as its balance sheet, income statement and annual financial report. It comprises the rectors of all public and private universities in Catalonia, the chairs of the social councils of all Catalan public universities, representatives of the Government of Catalonia, members of the academic community, students and representatives of the most prominent trade unions in the higher education sector. It has a total of 31 members. In most cases, members of the Governing Board serve for as long as they hold the office by virtue of which they were appointed. The only fixed-term appointments are those of the three academic members, who are appointed for a four-year term, renewable once, and the student and trade union representatives, who are appointed for a two-year term, also renewable once. Student members may serve only while they retain their status as university students. The Governing Board operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#).

Director. The director is responsible for the technical and administrative management of AQU Catalunya and for implementing the decisions of the Governing Board and the Standing Commission. The director is appointed through an [open, competitive selection process](#) [CAT] in accordance with the criteria established by the Governing Board. The appointment is for a four-year term, renewable once, and is based on the principles of merit, competence and suitability. Under [Decree 315/2016, of 8 November, approving the Statute of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#), the director also serves as president of the Institutional and Programme Review Commission.

5.3.2. Review bodies

Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP). The Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP) is the collegiate body at AQU Catalunya responsible for approving the methodologies, criteria and procedures that underpin the Agency's external quality assurance of programmes and institutions, and for ensuring their rigour and technical consistency. In carrying out its responsibilities, the

CAIP operates through subject- and function-specific review commissions,⁴ which undertake the corresponding assessment, accreditation and certification activities. The CAIP comprises its president, ten members of the academic community, two professionals and one student. It operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#), which also govern its membership.

[Research Assessment Commission \(CAR\)](#). The Research Assessment Commission (CAR) is responsible for the quality assurance of academic and research staff at Catalan higher education institutions. It approves assessment criteria and procedures and carries out its assessment duties through subject-specific review commissions, which issue the corresponding reports.⁵ It is also legally responsible for reviewing teaching assessment handbooks. The CAR comprises its president and 20 members of the academic community. When certifying teaching assessment handbooks, it also includes a student member. It operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#).

[Appeals Commission](#). The Appeals Commission is responsible for deciding appeals lodged against decisions of the review commissions. Its decisions conclude the administrative appeals process. The Commission comprises its president and five members of the academic community. When reviewing cases relating to degree programmes and institutions, it also includes a student member. It operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#).

5.3.3. Advisory bodies

[Advisory Commission](#). The Advisory Commission is the Agency's consultative body. It supports AQU Catalunya by advising on strategic priorities, contributing to the development and improvement of its procedures, and helping to formulate proposals for action, with the aim of ensuring the quality of the Agency's activities in line with international benchmarks. It comprises the president and the director of AQU Catalunya, four national and two international academics, two students from Catalan universities, and two representatives of Catalonia's most prominent trade unions. It operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#).

[Vice Rectors Committee](#). Through the Vice Rectors Committee – which comprises the director of AQU Catalunya and the vice rectors for quality matters at all Catalan universities – the Agency coordinates the strategic and institutional aspects of its

⁴ The CAIP's specific commissions: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences 1, Social Sciences 2, Experimental Sciences, Health Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Doctoral programmes, and Institutional Assessment.

⁵ The CAR's specific commissions: Humanities, Social Sciences, Experimental Sciences, Life Sciences, Health and Medical Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, and Teaching and Management Activity.

activities, as well as the direction of its review methodologies and the implementation of the regulations governing them.

University QA Units Committee. Through the University QA Units Committee – which comprises the director of AQU Catalunya, the heads of the university quality assurance units at all Catalan universities, and AQU Catalunya technical staff – the Agency coordinates the implementation of its review procedures and methodologies, as well as the regulations governing them.

Student Advisory Committee. Comprising the director of AQU Catalunya and students from Catalan universities, the Student Advisory Committee works to broaden and systematise student participation in AQU Catalunya's review activities. It also advises the Agency on projects that have a direct impact on students and contributes to studies of relevance to the student community. This committee has maximum of 12 members, who must be enrolled in an official degree programme. Priority is given to students with experience in student representation or in quality assurance-related activities. Appointments are approved by the Director of the Agency. It operates in accordance with its [internal rules of procedure](#).

Technical Committee for Surveys. Comprising the director of AQU Catalunya, technical staff from all Catalan universities with expertise in survey design and administration, one representative of arts higher education and Agency staff, the Technical Committee for Surveys works to coordinate the content and administration of surveys, as well as the analysis of the resulting data.

5.3.4. Internal organisation

AQU Catalunya's staff are organised into six units, which manage the Agency's activities and provide technical and administrative support to its governing, review and advisory bodies.

- 1) **Executive Board**: responsible for strategic management, legal advice, internal quality assurance and communications. It supports the president, the director, the Governing Board and the Appeals Commission.
- 2) **Quality Assurance Department**: responsible for institutional and programme review activities. It supports the Institutional and Programme Review Commission, the Vice Rectors Committee, the University QA Units Committee and the Student Advisory Committee.
- 3) **Assessment of Teaching Staff and Research Department**: responsible for the assessment of teaching staff and research. It supports the Research Assessment Commission.
- 4) **Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department**: responsible for internationalisation, surveys and studies. It supports the Advisory Commission and the Technical Committee for Surveys.

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- 5) **IT Department**: responsible for the Agency's technological infrastructure and IT applications supporting review management and the dissemination of its activities.
- 6) **Administration Department**: responsible for financial management, budgeting and human resources.

6. FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF AQU CATALUNYA

6.1. Activities within the scope of the ESG

AQU Catalunya carries out the following external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG:

6.1.1. Review of degree programmes in the Catalan Higher Education System

As part of its [programme review activities](#), the Agency undertakes the following review processes for bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD programmes offered by Catalan universities and arts higher education institutions:

- > **Validation:** Proposals for new recognised degree programmes must undergo a preliminary assessment before they can be offered. This process, known as validation or *ex-ante* accreditation, ensures the quality of new degree programmes by assessing whether their content and structure are appropriate to their educational level. It also promotes continuous improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- > **Monitoring:** The monitoring process is intended to demonstrate progress in the continuous improvement of recognised degree programmes. Universities are responsible for internally monitoring their own programmes. AQU Catalunya carries out risk-based monitoring, taking into account the areas for improvement and requirements identified during previous review processes, in accordance with the established procedure.
- > **Modification:** Universities wishing to introduce changes to their recognised degree programmes can do so through the modification process. This process provides for the prior validation of proposed changes before they are implemented.
- > **Accreditation:** The purpose of accreditation is to verify, through an external site visit, that a degree programme is being delivered as outlined during the validation (*ex-ante* accreditation) process or since its most recent accreditation. It also confirms that degree programmes meet the required standards and that graduates achieve the intended level of education.

The way these processes are applied varies depending on whether the institution holds institutional accreditation. In the case of arts higher education, they are adapted to reflect the specific characteristics of these programmes and the applicable regulatory framework.

During the review period, at the request of the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC), the Agency signed the [Memorandum of Understanding between AQU Catalunya and MusiQuE](#) (2024) to facilitate the joint review of the institution and boost its international perspective.

Between 2020 and 2022, AQU Catalunya introduced a quality assurance scheme for short learning programmes. The scheme applied exclusively to short learning programmes which formed part of the strategic framework established by the Catalan Ministry of Research and Universities. As no further programmes have been incorporated into this framework, AQU Catalunya is shifting from a programme-based approach to an institutional approach to the review of these qualifications. This change will take effect in July 2026. EQAR has accepted the Substantive Change Report withdrawing this activity from the Register (RC/C166, 18.05.2026).

6.1.2. Institutional review in the Catalan Higher Education System

As part of its [institutional review activities](#),⁶ AQU Catalunya carries out the following processes:

- > **Certification of internal quality assurance systems (IQAs).** In 2007, AQU Catalunya launched a programme to support higher education institutions in designing internal quality assurance systems (IQAS). Since 2019, the Agency has also certified the implementation of IQAS at institutional level. The programme comprises two stages: design and certification. Both stages use the same assessment method. The only difference is that the design stage relies on documentary review, whereas the certification stage also includes an external site visit.

The current version of the guidelines does not explicitly include the design stage because, prior to registration on EQAR, all university institutions in Catalonia had already undergone an assessment of the design of their IQAS. Nevertheless, the same guidelines remain fully applicable to both stages of the review process. AQU Catalunya continues to assess the design of IQAS for Catalan arts higher education institutions.

- > **Institutional accreditation.** Institutional accreditation comprises two stages. The first is the initial accreditation, which is granted once an institution meets the criteria established in the applicable regulations. The second takes place six years later, when the institution must renew its accreditation. Renewal involves both an internal and an external review, the latter including a site visit by a panel of experts. The purpose of institutional accreditation renewal is to verify that the institution continues to ensure the quality of the higher education it provides and

⁶ Under Spanish legislation, institutional accreditation is granted to institutions (*centros*) rather than universities.

that the learning outcomes achieved meet expectations across the different subject areas and educational levels of its degree programmes.

Monitoring of institutional accreditation integrates the monitoring of the institution's accreditation status, the performance of its IQAS, and the delivery of the recognised degree programmes it offers. Universities are responsible for internally monitoring their own programmes.

AQU Catalunya carries out risk-based monitoring, taking into account the areas for improvement and requirements identified during previous review processes, in accordance with the established procedure.

- > **Teaching assessment handbooks.** Since 2003, AQU Catalunya has worked with the Catalan universities to develop and implement models for evaluating teaching performance, with an eye to enhancing the quality, development and recognition of teaching in line with European standards. Universities assess teaching staff every five years using their own teaching assessment handbooks, which must comply with the requirements established by the Agency and are certified, monitored and accredited by AQU Catalunya for [six-year periods](#). This programme is integrated with IQAS certification. The methodology is being updated in 2026.

6.1.3. International reviews and reviews outside Catalonia

Although AQU Catalunya's activity outside the Catalan Higher Education System is relatively modest in terms of volume, it provides significant added value. During the 2022–2026 review period, the Agency undertook the following activities:

Programme quality assurance

AQU Catalunya conducted the following reviews:

- > **[European joint programmes under the European Approach](#).** Since 2022, AQU Catalunya has reviewed eight programmes, four of which have subsequently undergone a follow-up review. All involve at least one university from the Catalan Higher Education System. In 2026, the Agency also scheduled its first review under the European Approach that does not involve a Catalan university.
- > **[Medicine degree programmes accredited against the Basic Standards for Medical Education](#).** Degree programmes at five Catalan medical schools have been accredited against these standards. In 2024, AQU Catalunya was recognised by the Government of Iceland and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) as an accrediting agency for medicine degree programmes in Iceland. AQU Catalunya signed a collaboration agreement with the [University of Iceland to assess its Faculty of Medicine](#) in 2023 and conducted an external site visit in 2025.
- > **[Collaboration agreement with the Balearic Agency](#):** AQU Catalunya has a collaboration agreement with the Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher

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Education (AQUIB) to review arts higher education programmes in the Balearic Islands, as well as to share good practice in this area. During the review period, one programme was reviewed in 2022, and six programmes are being reviewed in 2026.

- > **Collaboration agreement with the Andorran Agency.** From 2018 to 2022, AQU Catalunya collaborated with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Andorra (AQUA) by providing external reports to support the Agency's validation of degree programmes. AQU Catalunya followed its own programme validation methodology, adapted to the Andorran context. One report was issued in 2022.

At the end of March 2026, AQU Catalunya took part in a pilot review to assess compliance with the [Joint European Degree Label](#), following the [Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label](#) developed under the Policy Lab initiative. AQU Catalunya reviewed two master's degree programmes using this methodology, making it the first quality assurance agency in Europe to award the label. As the pilot was carried out after this self-assessment report had reached an advanced stage of preparation, compliance with the ESG in relation to this project is described in Section 9 of this report.

Institutional review

During the 2022–2026 review period, the Agency carried out the following activities:

- > **Review of institutions offering cross-border education.** AQU Catalunya reviews institutions seeking to establish themselves in Catalonia and offer programmes leading to qualifications awarded by foreign institutions that are not recognised as equivalent to official qualifications in Catalonia. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that institutions meet the required quality standards in order to obtain the necessary authorisation. During the review period, AQU Catalunya carried out eight reviews and one follow-up review.
- > **Review of internal quality assurance systems (IQAS).**
 - AQU Catalunya reviewed the design of the IQAS at the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia. The same methodology used for Catalan institutions was applied, with only the regulatory framework adapted to the Colombian context.
 - In 2025, AQU Catalunya signed an agreement with the Universidad Abierta Interamericana in Argentina to review the design of its IQAS.

In 2016, AQU Catalunya launched the [International quality assurance of higher education. A tool for international academic mobility](#) initiative to review international institutions that requested its services. Following the approval of AQU Catalunya's

[2023–2026 Strategic Plan](#), the Agency updated the scope of this international activity in 2023 and now accepts only reviews of programmes and institutions conducted using the programme and institutional accreditation methodologies applied in Catalonia. EQAR has accepted the Substantive Change Report withdrawing this activity from the Register (RC/C166, 18 May 2026).

6.2. Activities outside the scope of the ESG

AQU Catalunya carries out three activities that fall outside the scope of the ESG. Nevertheless, they provide added value to the Catalan Higher Education System and support the Agency's quality assurance activities.

6.2.1. University teaching staff assessment

Under the Spanish regulatory framework, regional quality assurance agencies are responsible for assessing university teaching staff prior to recruitment, as well as for evaluating the merits of teaching and research staff. These activities are carried out by the Research Assessment Commission and are managed by the Assessment of Teaching Staff and Research Department. Further information is available on the Agency's website: [University teaching staff assessment](#).

In this context, the Agency became a signatory to [DORA](#) in 2020 and joined [CoARA](#) in 2022. In 2025, it approved its [2025–2029 CoARA Action Plan](#).

6.2.2. Surveys of the Catalan Higher Education System

Through its Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department, AQU Catalunya also conducts [surveys of the Catalan Higher Education System](#). It regularly coordinates the following surveys:

- > **Survey on university graduates' employment outcomes.** Conducted every three years since 2001 (the ninth survey took place in 2026), the survey covers bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD programmes, as well as arts higher education. With a response rate of close to 50% and a mixed-method approach, it is one of the most well-established and representative studies of its kind in Europe. It is recognised as an official survey of the Government of Catalonia, and its indicators are used in the quality assurance of degree programmes and institutions.
- > **Survey on employers' opinions of graduate's university education and job performance.** Conducted every three years since 2014, this survey gathers the views of employers on the education of recent graduates. It covers the recruitment of recent graduates and the factors influencing recruitment decisions, recruitment difficulties faced by employers, the skills that recent

graduates need to improve, and employer satisfaction with these graduates' competencies. The findings help universities to identify opportunities to improve their degree programmes.

- > **Recent graduate satisfaction survey.** Conducted annually since 2015 (the 12th survey took place in 2026), the survey covers bachelor's and master's degree programmes, as well as arts higher education. It provides a common set of indicators to support the improvement of educational programmes, including satisfaction with the teaching and learning process, services and facilities, and the skills acquired. Since 2024, it has also included annual modules on specific strategic themes.

Finally, AQU Catalunya provides technical leadership for the Via Universitària survey run by the [Vives Network of Universities](#) [CAT]. The survey aims to paint a comprehensive picture of the university student population, their study conditions, and their satisfaction with the university experience and teaching. The findings are used to assess whether university policies facilitate students' access to, support during and full benefit from their higher education experience.

6.2.3. International projects

AQU Catalunya carries out its activities in line with international benchmarks and promotes joint initiatives with higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and other organisations, both nationally and internationally. Between 2022 and 2026, the Agency has participated or is participating in the following [international projects](#):

- > [Study on the Ratification and Implementation of the Tokyo and Global Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in ASEAN \(SCOPE-HE\)](#) (2026–present)
- > [Digital Tools and Quality Assurance for Automatic Recognition \(DIGI-RECA\)](#) (2025–present)
- > [Capacitation pour l'Évaluation et Assurance Qualité des Formation doctorales et de la Recherche](#) (2023–present)
- > [Assessing and evaluating remote learning practices in STEM \(REMOTE\)](#) (2023–2026)
- > [Employability in Programme Development](#) (2021–2023)
- > [Complex Trajectories](#) (2020–2023)
- > [Structured Indicators for HEI Quality Systems Management \(SMART-QUAL\)](#) (2020–2023)

The Agency's involvement in quality assurance networks and associations is described in Section 5.1. History of this report.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE ESG

7.1. ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

STANDARD:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Mission, vision and values

AQU Catalunya's [mission and vision](#) are set out in its [2023–2026 Strategic Plan](#).

According to its vision, AQU Catalunya is an independent body within the Catalan Higher Education System. It supports higher education institutions in assuring the quality of their degree programmes, teaching staff and faculties/schools, for which those institutions are ultimately responsible. It also strives to be an instrument for knowledge generation with an international profile, helping higher education institutions to enhance their performance in a global context.

AQU Catalunya's mission is to assure the quality of higher education in Catalonia in accordance with international academic, social and quality standards, while serving society's interest in high-quality higher education. It pursues this mission by:

- > Upholding democratic values and promoting progress in higher education;
- > Engaging all social stakeholders in the service of the higher education community;
- > Relying on the expertise, motivation and commitment of its staff;
- > Carrying out analysis, review, certification, audit and accreditation processes;
- > Holding itself to international benchmarks and maintaining a strong focus on innovation; and
- > Promoting transparency and openness, both across the higher education system and in its own activities.

AQU Catalunya's values are set out in its [Code of Ethics](#) (2019), which groups them into two categories:

- > **Fundamental values:** dignity, independence, impartiality, integrity, innovation and continuous improvement, public service, diversity, equity and trust.
- > **Instrumental values:** transparency and accountability, cooperation, efficiency, internationalisation and competence.

Activities

AQU Catalunya is an external quality assurance agency with a well-established system for managing its activities. The Agency operates on the basis of a four-year strategic plan. The current [2023–2026 Strategic Plan](#) is in force, and work is under way in 2026 to prepare the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan. Each strategic plan guides AQU Catalunya's activity over a period of four years. The Agency also has a number of subject-specific plans, including the 2024–2027 ESG Action Plan⁷, the [2024–2027 Equality Plan](#) [CAT], the Measures for Equality and Non-Discrimination of LGBTI People at AQU Catalunya (2025–2027), and the [2025–2029 CoARA Action Plan](#).

These strategic and subject-specific plans are brought together in an [annual activity programme](#) [CAT], which is approved by the Governing Board. Conceived as a management roadmap, each activity programme sets out the objectives and activities for that year. Activity programming is structured around corporate social responsibility commitments (Sustainable Development Goals) and the Agency's strategic priorities:

Table 5. Relationship between corporate social responsibility commitments and strategic priorities

Corporate social responsibility commitments (SDGs)	Strategic priorities
Commitment to improving higher education	Institutional and programme quality Quality of teaching staff 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 the workplace	Internal organisation

Source: AQU Catalunya

The Agency conducts quarterly reviews throughout the year to monitor progress against its annual activity programme and the plans brought together within it. Examples include:

- > 2025 Activity Closure Report.

⁷ Available for review during the site visit.

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- > First Quarter 2026 Activity Monitoring Report.
- > Monitoring Report on the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan.
- > Monitoring Report on the 2025–2029 CoARA Action Plan.

At the end of each year, AQU Catalunya reports on the results of its annual activity programme in two ways: through an [annual activities and corporate social responsibility report](#), which is also approved by the Governing Board; and through an [annual meta-evaluation report \[CAT\] \(2025 Meta-evaluation\)](#), which summarises key aspects of its internal processes and the deployment of its strategic, annual and subject-specific plans. The Agency performs meta-evaluations at three further levels: the Executive Board’s review of the IQAS, meta-evaluation of the processes assigned to each department, and meta-evaluation of individual projects.

Figure 4. Activity management framework at AQU Catalunya



Source: AQU Catalunya

Every year, the Governing Board approves the [schedule of external site visits \[CAT\]](#) to institutions within the Catalan Higher Education System, which are subsequently incorporated into the annual activity programme. These visits are arranged in advance with the relevant higher education institutions before being approved, taking into account the applicable regulatory framework. The external quality assurance activities carried out by AQU Catalunya between 2022 and 2026 are shown below:

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Table 6. External quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG carried out by AQU Catalunya (2022–2026)⁸

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ⁹
PROGRAMME REVIEW					
Validation	51	91	75	85	117
Monitoring	37	39	29	19	39
Modification	182	97	169	246	274
Accreditation	160	85	60	60	72
Accreditation of short learning programmes: review of designs and implementation proposals	6	–	–	–	Discontinued
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW					
IQAs certification	13	8	16	9	6
Institutional accreditation					
<i>Initial accreditation</i>	11	13	13	12	8
<i>Follow-up</i>	–	10	14	11	18
<i>Accreditation renewal</i>	–	1	–	10	14
Accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks	–	2	2	1	–
<i>Follow-up</i>	–	–	1	–	1
INTERNATIONAL					
Joint programmes (European Approach)	–	2	2	4	1
Joint European Degree Label (pilot)	–	–	–	–	2 ¹⁰
Medicine degree programmes accredited against the Basic Standards for Medical Education					
<i>Catalonia</i>	2	–	1	2	–
<i>Other countries (Iceland)</i>	–	–	–	–	1
Validation					
<i>Andorra</i>	1	–	–	–	–
<i>Balearic Islands</i>	1	–	–	–	6
IQAS certification					
<i>International institutions</i>	–	–	–	1	1
Review institutions offering foreign degrees	1	1	1	3	1
<i>Follow-up</i>	–	–	–	1	–
International quality assurance	–	–	–	–	Discontinued
TOTAL	465	349	383	464	561

Source: AQU Catalunya

⁸ Includes arts higher education.

⁹ Projections as of 31 December 2026. Many of these reviews are still under way.

¹⁰ Pilot reviews conducted under the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument for agencies interested in evaluating the Joint European Degree Label.

As shown in the above table, AQU Catalunya's core activities over the past five years have continued to be the external review of degree programmes and institutions within the Catalan Higher Education System. The following developments emerged during the review period:

- > **Shifting towards institutional accreditation.** The Catalan Higher Education System is moving towards the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions. Institutional accreditation currently exists alongside programme accreditation. Although the former replaces the latter once an institution has obtained institutional accreditation, further work is needed to align the two processes, and AQU Catalunya is currently working to achieve this.
- > **Rethinking the quality assurance strategy.** The introduction of institutional accreditation into the external quality assurance framework of the Catalan Higher Education System, together with AQU Catalunya's commitment to advancing its implementation, requires a reassessment of the overall quality assurance strategy. The [QUALINS Framework](#) sets out the key elements for its implementation between 2025 and 2030. The main developments are outlined below:

1. At present, 40% of higher education institutions hold institutional accreditation, meaning that approximately 60% of all degree programmes in the Catalan Higher Education System are now accredited through the institutional route. As a result, the number of programmes requiring programme accreditation has fallen by 38% over the review period, from 160 in 2022 to 60 in 2025.
2. At the same time, AQU Catalunya is implementing a strategy to align the external quality assurance processes for degree programmes with institutional accreditation renewal cycles. In 2026, the Agency is carrying out a focused validation pilot for institutionally accredited institutions, integrating the validation process with IQAS certification and institutional accreditation. The aim is to avoid overlap in the elements assessed and to enhance the relevance and added value of the validation process.
3. Monitoring of institutional accreditation are a key part of the framework, as they provide evidence of how institutions are progressing in the continuous improvement of their educational provision. This process centres on both the IQAs and the recognised degree programmes offered by the institution.

Over the coming years, AQU Catalunya will continue implementing the actions set out in the [QUALINS Framework](#), with a particular focus on strengthening university autonomy, fostering a culture of quality and introducing a risk-based approach to quality assurance.

- > **Consolidating the European Approach.** AQU Catalunya has consolidated its experience in the review of international joint degree programmes under the

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European Approach. It has also been participating in a European Commission technical support initiative in 2026 to advance the implementation of the Joint European Degree Label.

- > **Taking a new approach to micro-credentials.** AQU Catalunya has updated its approach to the quality assurance of micro-credentials. To optimise resources, it has moved away from reviewing them on a programme-by-programme basis and instead incorporates them into the IQAS.
- > **Reviewing medicine degree programmes.** AQU Catalunya has reviewed medicine degree programmes against the Basic Standards for Medical Education. This experience has enabled the Agency to perform a review in Iceland.

At the international level, AQU Catalunya has discontinued its international accreditation activity, and no reviews have been carried out during the review period, as explained in Section 6.1.3 of this self-assessment report.

Finally, AQU Catalunya continues to prepare reports on the outcomes of accreditation processes at the request of the Government of Catalonia. These reports support the development of higher education policy.

Stakeholders

As explained in Section 5 of this self-assessment report, AQU Catalunya has always worked in close collaboration with universities and its other stakeholders. Accordingly, the [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on AQU Catalunya](#) and the [Agency's Statute](#) provide for the involvement of stakeholders in its governance and activities. The stakeholders involved in the Agency are shown below:

Figure 5. Stakeholder involvement in AQU Catalunya

Government of Catalonia	Higher education institutions	Academics	Students	Society
• Appoints the president of AQU Catalunya (Art. 6) • Appoints two representatives to the Governing Board (Arts. 7 and 8) • Proposes the appointment of the president and four members of the CAR (Art. 12) • Oversees the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's activities (Art. 1)	• Rectors are <i>ex officio</i> members of the Governing Board and Standing Commission (Arts. 7 and 8) • Advisory committees (Vice Rectors Committee, University QA Units Committee, Technical Committee for Surveys, etc.)	• Members of the Governing Board and Standing Commission (Arts. 7 and 8) • Members of the Advisory Commission (which includes members of the international academic community) (Art. 10) • Members of all review commissions and committees, which also include international experts	• Members of the Governing Board and Standing Commission (Arts. 7 and 8) • Members of the Advisory Commission (Art. 10) • Members of the Student Advisory Committee • Members of all review commissions and committees • Invited to participate in the Appeals Commission when reviewing an appeal concerning a degree programme or institution	• Chairs of the social councils are <i>ex officio</i> members of the Governing Board and Standing Commission (Arts. 7 and 8) • Two trade union representatives serve on the Governing Board and Standing Commission (Arts. 7 and 8) • Two trade union representatives serve on the Advisory Commission (Art. 10) • Professionals participate in all review commissions and committees • Participation in projects, including international projects, and surveys

Source: AQU Catalunya

With regard to the requirement to include international members in its commissions, both the [CAIP](#) and the [Advisory Commission](#) include such members. All external review panels involved in international review processes also include international experts.

Stakeholder needs and expectations are identified through [Quality and Information Security Management System](#) (QISMS), which is designed to gather and assess feedback on AQU Catalunya's mission, organisation, procedures and other aspects of its work. Meetings of the commissions are the principal mechanism through which the Agency gathers input from its stakeholders. It also engages with stakeholders through a range of other channels, including dedicated mailboxes, consultation processes and surveys.

Section 4.2 of this self-assessment report describes the Agency's collaboration with national bodies such as REACU and the Council of Universities.

7.2. ESG Standard 3.2 Official status

STANDARD:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

AQU Catalunya's official status within the Catalan Higher Education System has remained unchanged since the previous external review. The Agency's functions are established by [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on AQU Catalunya](#), enacted by the Parliament

of Catalonia, and are further defined in the [Statute of AQU Catalunya](#), which implement the law and govern the Agency's organisation and operation.

In 2024, AQU Catalunya was recognised by the Government of Iceland and the [World Federation for Medical Education](#) (WFME) as an accrediting agency for medicine degree programmes in Iceland. The Agency signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Iceland to review its Faculty of Medicine using AQU Catalunya's methodology, adapted to the Icelandic context.

Until 2025, all international joint programmes reviewed by AQU Catalunya under the [European Approach](#) included the participation of at least one Catalan university. In 2026, for the first time, it will review a programme in which no Catalan university is involved. It is able to carry out reviews under the European Approach because it has been registered on EQAR since 2008.

7.3. ESG Standard 3.3 Independence

STANDARD:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third-party influence.

Compliance with this standard remains unchanged since the previous external review. Technical independence continues to be identified as a strength in the Agency's 2026 SWOT analysis (provided in Section 10 of this report), as recognised by both the review panels and the higher education institutions.

The following sections summarise compliance with the standard under its three dimensions.

Organisational independence

Organisational independence is ensured through [Law 15/2015 on AQU Catalunya](#). Article 1 provides that: *"AQU Catalunya, in the exercise of its functions in the promotion and assurance of quality in higher education, shall act objectively and with technical and professional independence, without instruction from any public administration or other institution in the fulfilment of its objectives. AQU Catalunya is a government-run public agency subject to private law that, as a separate legal entity, possesses its own legal personality and patrimony."*

AQU Catalunya is organised into governing bodies, review bodies and advisory bodies, as described in Section 5.3 of this self-assessment report. The composition and functions of each body are clearly defined. The appointment procedures for the presidents and members of the Agency's governing and review bodies are summarised below:

Table 7. Appointment procedures for the presidents and members of AQU Catalunya's governing and review bodies

Body	Appointment	Key features
President of the Governing Board	Article 6, Law 15/2015	The president is appointed by the Government of Catalonia, on the proposal of the minister for universities, from among individuals of recognised standing and distinction in the academic community with proven experience in higher education quality assurance and research. The appointment is for a four-year term and may be renewed once.
Governing Board	Article 7, Law 15/2015	AQU Catalunya does not appoint any of its members. Some serve <i>ex officio</i> (the president, rectors and social council chairs), while others are appointed by bodies external to the Agency (the Government of Catalonia, trade unions, students, etc.). There are 31 members in total.
Director of AQU Catalunya	Article 9, Law 15/2015	The director is appointed through an open, competitive selection process in accordance with the criteria established by the Governing Board. The appointment is for a four-year term, renewable once, and is based on the principles of merit, competence and suitability.
Research Assessment Commission (CAR)	Article 12, Law 15/2015	The CAR's president is appointed by the Governing Board from among the candidates proposed by the minister for universities and must have outstanding scientific credentials. The remaining members are appointed by the Governing Board: four on the proposal of the minister for research and universities, and 16 on the proposal of the CAR's president. There are 21 members in total.
Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP)	Article 19, Decree 315/2016	The director of AQU Catalunya serves as the CAIP's president. The remaining members are appointed by the Governing Board on the proposal of the CAIP president. There are 14 members in total.
Appeals Commission	Article 16, Law 15/2015	The president is an academic member of the Governing Board. The remaining members are appointed by the Governing Board on the proposal of the president of AQU Catalunya. It currently has six members, one representing each field of knowledge.

Source: AQU Catalunya

Operational independence

As described in the previous section, Article 1 of [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on AQU Catalunya](#) guarantees the operational independence of AQU Catalunya's review

commissions. In addition, Article 17 provides for their technical and professional independence, as well as the transparency of their criteria and procedures: *“In line with current regulations, the committees referred to in articles 12, 13 and 14¹¹ must operate with professional and technical independence, must prepare and approve the criteria and procedures for assessment, accreditation, certification and auditing, and must perform the assessments, certifications and accreditations incumbent on Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya within their respective fields for which they are ultimately responsible. The Governing Board shall ensure all committees are granted technical independence.”*

Accordingly, AQU Catalunya’s review commissions and committees are guaranteed technical and professional independence and operate with full autonomy from both university and government influence.

From a financial perspective, the Government of Catalonia provides the funding required each year to enable the Agency to carry out its planned activities without incurring a budget deficit.

Independence of formal outcomes

AQU Catalunya ensures the independence of the formal decisions taken by its review bodies. The following decision-making levels can be distinguished in its external quality assurance processes:

- > **Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP) and Research Assessment Commission (CAR):** These commissions define and approve assessment criteria and procedures and assign individual cases to the specific commissions.
- > **Specific commissions:** These commissions assess applications and any evidence gathered throughout the process; where the process includes an external site visit, they also take into account the external review report prepared by the external review panel before reaching a decision.
- > **External review panels:** Where the process includes an external site visit, the CAIP appoints an external review panel, which prepares a site visit report. This report is submitted to the relevant specific commission as evidence within the process and serves as the basis for its decision.

Decisions arising from the review processes may be appealed to AQU Catalunya’s Appeals Commission, which issues its decision in accordance with the applicable procedure, thereby bringing the process to a close.

¹¹ These articles refer to the Research Assessment Commission and the Institutional and Programme Review Commission, which are the only commissions that approve review criteria and procedures.

7.4. ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis

STANDARD:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

AQU Catalunya produces two types of thematic analysis, each serving a different purpose:

- > Reports based on the findings of external quality assurance processes.
- > Thematic studies.

These publications are intended to ensure transparency in the outcomes of external quality assurance activities and to generate knowledge that can support quality enhancement in higher education institutions and inform public policy. To maximise their reach, they are typically launched alongside an information or reflection session (held either in person and online or entirely online) focusing on the report's findings (see Annex 3 of this self-assessment report). To make access quick and easy, all publications issued by AQU Catalunya can be found using the [publications finder](#) on its website. [Launched in 2023](#), the tool enables users to identify and retrieve all publications issued by AQU Catalunya since 2003. Since 2025, selected reports and methodologies have also been available for download through Zenodo, the multidisciplinary open-access repository. The table below summarises the thematic analyses published during the review period. A full list is provided in Annex 2 of this report.

AQU Catalunya has a procedure under which it prepares a four-year plan for the thematic analyses to be carried out. This plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis. As shown in Figure 4, we are currently working under the 2024-2027 thematic analysis planning framework.

Table 8. Thematic analyses published between 2022 and 2026

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
REPORTS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES					
Degree programmes		1			1*
Institutions	1				1*
Teaching staff	2	1			1
Processes	2		1		1
THEMATIC STUDIES					
Employment outcomes		5		1	4*
Employer opinions	5	2	1	2	
Recent graduate satisfaction	1				3
Via Universitària	1			1	

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	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
TOTAL	12	9	2	4	11

Source: AQU Catalunya

*In preparation.

A total of 32 reports have been published, with a further six currently in preparation. The decline in the number of reports produced in 2024 and 2025 reflects the need to focus resources on adapting the Agency's review processes to the new regulatory framework, as well as on developing the [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System](#) (2025), the five [subject benchmark statements for the design and validation of degree programmes](#), and the three [Focus: Tools for university quality](#), all of which are intended to support higher education institutions in assuring the quality of their degree programmes.

Reports arising from external quality assurance processes

This category comprises reports based on the findings of AQU Catalunya's external quality assurance activities. Where appropriate, these findings are complemented by quantitative data from the Agency's surveys and other official sources. The reports are organised into four areas: [degree programmes](#), [institutions](#), [teaching staff](#) and [processes](#).

In the area of degree programmes, AQU Catalunya published a cross-sectional report on the [Master's Degree in Educational Psychology](#) during the review period and is currently preparing a report on arts higher education.

In the area of institutions, AQU Catalunya published the report [Certification of internal quality assurance systems in the Catalan Higher Education System, 2016–2021](#) in 2022. The report analyses the results of the certification process in Catalonia to date, examining the findings for each assessment dimension, the most common requirements identified during the reviews and examples of good practice. A further report, currently in preparation, examines the monitoring of institutional accreditation and identifies good practice and areas for improvement highlighted by the review commission.

Although the assessment of teaching staff falls outside the scope of the present review, it is worth noting that AQU Catalunya has published four reports during the review period. These examine the application of the gender perspective in review processes, the age profile of applicants, the profile of associate professors, and the actions undertaken by the CAR to promote the gender perspective between 2024 and 2025.

With regard to processes, the Agency has published a report on the [integration of the gender perspective into the review of degree programmes](#) [CAT], analysed the [use of artificial intelligence in programme accreditation](#) [CAT], and published two further

reports on the [accreditation of PhD programmes](#) [CAT] and [virtual external review visits](#) [CAT].

Thematic studies

This category comprises studies on thematic areas of particular relevance to higher education institutions in Catalonia.

During the five-year review period, AQU Catalunya continued to develop a series of key studies on the relationship between higher education and employment.

[Employment outcomes](#). Surveys were conducted in 2023 and 2026. Five reports covering different types of qualifications were published in 2023, together with a joint report on Environmental Sciences produced in collaboration with the Valencian Community. In 2025, the Agency also published a report on equity and social mobility. New reports on bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD programmes, as well as arts higher education, are being prepared in 2026.

[Employers' opinion](#). The fourth employers' survey was completed during the review period, culminating in the publication and public presentation of a report in 2025. The findings highlighted employers' satisfaction with graduates and the value of new forms of provision, such as dual bachelor's degrees and final projects carried out in collaboration with companies.

[Recent graduate satisfaction](#). The survey has continued to be conducted annually. In 2024, it was redesigned to include a variable thematic module, focusing on the gender perspective in 2024, mental health in 2025 and artificial intelligence in 2026. Three reports were prepared in 2025, including an overall summary report and a report on gender, both of which were published in 2026.

AQU Catalunya also contributes to [Via Universitària](#), an initiative of the [Vives Network of Universities](#) [CAT], by providing technical leadership in studying university students' profiles, study conditions and satisfaction with their university experience. During the review period, AQU Catalunya contributed to the third (2020–2022) and fourth (2023–2025) survey cycles.

In April 2026, the CAIP approved a pilot methodology to assess the impact of institutional accreditation. This methodology is designed to identify whether institutional accreditation has led to the expected changes within higher education institutions and to determine the extent to which those changes can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to the institutional accreditation process.

7.5. ESG Standard 3.5 Resources

STANDARD:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Human resources

As of 31 December 2025, AQU Catalunya employed 59 staff members, including the director: 43 women and 16 men. The average age of staff was 46.4 years. Of the Agency's employees, 54 held permanent contracts, three were employed on interim contracts pending permanent recruitment, and one was employed on a fixed-term contract to meet temporary operational needs. Technical staff accounted for 77.6% of the workforce, while 12% of employees held a PhD. Staffing levels increased from 54 employees in 2022 to 58 in 2026. AQU Catalunya's staff are organised into departments, each with clearly defined responsibilities and functions.

Table 9. Distribution of human resources by department and staff category

CATEGORY	Executive Board	Quality Assurance Department	Assessment of Teaching Staff and Research Department	Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department	Administration Department	IT Department	TOTAL
Department Heads and Staff with Special Responsibilities	4	2	2	1	1	1	11
Senior technical staff	2	8		6			16
Technical staff	2	4	3		2	5	16
Administrative staff	4	2	5		4		15
	12	16	10	7	7	6	58

Source: AQU Catalunya

The Quality Assurance Department is AQU Catalunya's largest department, reflecting its responsibility for external quality assurance within the scope of the ESG. The cross-sectional departments (Executive Board, Administration and IT) support these activities within their respective remits. The Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department manages the Agency's participation in international projects and contributes to the preparation of thematic reports.

All Agency staff are required to comply with the [Code of Ethics](#) and the Declaration of Absence of Conflict of Interest, both of which are signed upon appointment following

an open, competitive recruitment process. These documents ensure that staff carry out their duties professionally, ethically and free from conflicts of interest.

AQU Catalunya has established procedures covering all aspects of human resource management, including recruitment, induction, training and departure. Workload monitoring shows that around 90% of staff are able to complete their normal working hours without difficulty, while around 10% – primarily heads of department – have experienced periods of excessive workload.

AQU Catalunya ensures the technical competence of its staff through training. The Agency has an approved Staff Training Plan, covering areas such as review methodologies, quality culture, quality assurance systems, information security and technological skills. During the review period, the 2019–2022 Staff Training Plan was implemented, and the 2026–2030 Staff Training Plan was approved in 2026. Staff development is highly valued within the Agency: 76% of employees consider that AQU Catalunya promotes continuous learning in the workplace.¹² The SWOT analysis (see section 10 of this report) also identifies the Agency’s qualified, committed and service-oriented team as one of its strengths. Training needs are identified annually at an individual level, enabling staff to undertake basic or specialised training that is relevant to their roles. Under the collective agreement, employees are entitled to up to 40 working hours of training each year. All training activities are evaluated in terms of both participant satisfaction and their impact. Each year, the Agency prepares an annual training report evaluating the implementation of the previous year’s training activities. AQU Catalunya is currently adapting its induction and onboarding process for delivery through the Agency’s online learning environment¹³.

AQU Catalunya evaluates staff performance through an annual appraisal process. Once a year, all members of staff undergo an assessment of their professional competencies conducted by their line manager. The appraisal reviews each employee’s professional development over the previous year and identifies training and development needs. The results of the assessment of core competencies are also taken into account in the evaluation of staff members’ achievement of their overall objectives. All appraisals are recorded through the Agency’s ÍCARUS information system.

In 2025, AQU Catalunya conducted a psychosocial risk survey, followed by a staff satisfaction survey in 2026. While 72% of respondents (representing 81% of the workforce) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with working at AQU Catalunya, the survey also revealed widespread concerns regarding pay and the lack of a promotion and career development system, as also reflected in the SWOT analysis. With regard to pay and promotion, the Agency is bound by the regulations of the Government of Catalonia. Nevertheless, AQU Catalunya’s new director is developing

¹² Staff satisfaction survey (January 2026).

¹³ Evidence available for review during the site visit.

an initiative to identify solutions within the scope permitted by the current regulatory framework.

AQU Catalunya operates a performance-related pay scheme linked to the achievement of objectives. These objectives include participation in training, attainment of the core competencies assessed through the performance appraisal process, and the implementation of an annual improvement initiative.

Financial resources

AQU Catalunya's budget has increased by 12% over the five-year review period. The majority of the Agency's funding – around 85% – comes from transfers from the Government of Catalonia, with the remainder generated through fees and service provision, primarily fees charged for the assessment of teaching staff. Fifty-eight per cent of the budget is allocated to staff costs, 40% to the Agency's activities, and the remaining 2% to investment.

Table 10. Trend in AQU Catalunya's revenue (2022–2026)

	Fees, sales of goods and services	Current transfers	Property income	Changes in financial assets	Total
2022	€454,019	€4,830,385	€55	€377,527	€5,661,985
2023	€355,083	€5,058,792	€114	€589,800	€6,003,789
2024	€405,011	€4,497,440	€ -	€882,197	€5,784,648
2025	€337,432	€5,162,678	€ -	€544,744	€6,044,855
2026¹⁴	€301,885	€5,418,075	€600	€136,713	€5,857,273

Source: AQU Catalunya

Table 11. Trend in AQU Catalunya's expenditure (2022–2026)

	Staff costs	Current goods and services	Financial expenses	Current transfers	Capital expenditure	Total
2022	€2,861,090	€2,669,588	€114	€8,877	€122,316	€5,661,985
2023	€3,118,252	€2,745,683	€564	€6,944	€132,346	€6,003,789
2024	€3,171,223	€2,472,194	€555	€8,330	€132,346	€5,784,648
2025	€3,462,677	€2,448,049	€172	€1,610	€132,346	€6,044,855
2026¹⁵	€3,457,705	€2,259,317	€193	€3,345	€136,713	€5,857,273

¹⁴ Initial budget for 2026.

¹⁵ As above.

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Staff costs	Current goods and services	Financial expenses	Current transfers	Capital expenditure	Total
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Source: AQU Catalunya

In terms of expenditure, 52% of the Agency's financial resources are allocated to quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, while 30% is devoted to the assessment of teaching staff, 6% to internationalisation, and 2% to knowledge generation and transfer.

The programme agreement between AQU Catalunya and the Government of Catalonia, provided for in Article 19 of [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on AQU Catalunya](#) to regulate the Agency's funding over successive four-year periods, has yet to be prepared and approved. The political and budgetary context has not provided favourable conditions for progress in this area, and successive budget extensions have required particularly careful financial planning and budget management by the Agency. Whenever additional funding has been required, it has been requested and granted.

AQU Catalunya has the legal autonomy to allocate its budget as it considers appropriate while fulfilling its purpose, within the applicable legal framework. Each year, it submits its year-end financial statements to the Governing Board for approval and consistently maintains a balanced budget, with expenditure not exceeding revenue. It also successfully undergoes annual [external financial and accounting audits](#)¹⁶ [CAT]. Overall, AQU Catalunya has sufficient resources to carry out its activities effectively. Nevertheless, two issues will require attention during the next review period: the adequacy of staff remuneration and the remuneration of external experts, which is currently considered insufficient. The Executive Board has already begun exploring options for addressing both issues.

Technical infrastructure and offices

AQU Catalunya has an in-house IT team responsible for developing and updating its software applications, which support the staff's management of quality assurance processes and the review activities carried out by external experts. The Agency complies with information security requirements and has been certified to ISO/IEC 27001 for information security management since 2015. Its offices also house a dedicated server room that provides the appropriate environment for its technical infrastructure.

AQU Catalunya is expected to relocate to new premises in 2027, in a building shared with other organisations of the Government of Catalonia.

¹⁶ To access the document, it must be downloaded.

7.6. ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

STANDARD:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Internal quality assurance

AQU Catalunya's [Quality and Information Security Management System](#) (QISMS) is fully embedded within the Agency and promotes continuous improvement through the Deming cycle (Plan - Do - Check - Act, PDCA), which is applied to both the Agency's usual activities and its management of the QISMS (see Annex 4 of this report). The quality management system has been certified to ISO 9001 since 2000. In 2015, it was integrated with the information security management system, which has been certified to ISO/IEC 27001 ever since.

AQU Catalunya operates in accordance with its [Quality and Information Security Policy](#), which is approved by the Governing Board and reviewed periodically. The policy sets out the Governing Board's commitments in relation to quality and information security. In terms of quality, these include complying with the ESG, maintaining an ISO-based quality management system and supporting staff in their continuous professional development. As for information security, the policy sets out commitments to safeguarding information by ensuring its confidentiality, integrity and availability, while fostering trust in the use of electronic systems.

The Quality and Information Security Manual describes the key features of the QISMS. In addition, all of AQU Catalunya's activities are documented through a suite of more than 200 documents defining processes and responsibilities, including 13 manuals, 83 procedures, 41 forms, 50 work instructions and 30 internal regulations. These documents, which are intended for in-house staff, are available through the Agency's SharePoint site and form part of the Staff Training Plan. They are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to reflect changes to existing activities and the introduction of new ones. A notable development in 2025 was the approval of internal regulations governing the use of generative artificial intelligence.

The operation of the QISMS is based on the following principles:

- > Stakeholder groups and their needs are identified.
- > Risks associated with the processes that make up the QISMS are identified and managed.
- > Appropriate actions are defined for each identified risk to prevent it or minimise its impact.

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Based on these arrangements, the activities set out each year in the annual activity programme are carried out in accordance with the QISMS procedures and instructions. Progress against the programme is monitored quarterly, and specific indicators are used to measure the performance of each process.

To systematically improve the QISMS, the director and heads of Departments carry out an annual management system review and an annual process meta-evaluation covering each process defined in the [Processes map](#).

The review covers:

- > The [Quality and Information Security Policy](#) and the Quality and Information Security Manual;
- > The status of improvement actions identified during the previous year;
- > Changes in AQU Catalunya's internal and external context that are relevant to the QISMS;
- > The performance of each process, taking into account indicator results and trends against established objectives, user feedback, and identified strengths and weaknesses;
- > The business impact analysis (BIA); and
- > The risk treatment plan (RTP) and the assessment of information security risk levels.

The Agency has set up internal and external feedback mechanisms to take account of the views of both internal and external users. Staff feedback is gathered through the employee portal and regular surveys. External stakeholders provide feedback through the Agency's corporate mailboxes, satisfaction surveys, thematic workshops (see Annex 3 of this report) and regular meetings.

AQU Catalunya also has an internal platform for monitoring performance indicators and activity objectives (ÍCARUS-Indicators),¹⁷ which it uses to monitor its activities and support its reporting and information needs.

¹⁷ Indicators will be available for review during the site visit.

Figure 6. Screenshot of the internal performance indicator management application

Codi	Nom	Any	Objectiu mínim	Objectiu màxim	1er Semestre	2on Semestre	Total	Unitat	Semestral
ACR0100	Nombre de visites planificades	2025		47			46	Anual	
ACR0101	Nombre de visites finalitzades	2025					43	Anual	
ACR0110	Nombre de centres (únics) visitats	2025					45	Anual	
ACR0200	Expedients de títols	2025		61			59	Anual	
ACR0201	Expedients de graus	2025		13			12	Anual	
ACR0202	Expedients de màsters	2025		32			32	Anual	
ACR0203	Expedients de programes de doctorat	2025		16			15	Anual	
ACR0401	Títols acreditats (favorables)	2025					59	Anual	
ACR0403	Títols acreditats amb resultat "acreditat amb excel·lència"	2025					4	Anual	
ACR0411	Títols acreditats amb resultat "acreditat"	2025					49	Anual	

Source: AQU Catalunya

The findings of the management system review¹⁸ and the process meta-evaluations are presented to the Quality Management and Information Security Committee and documented each year in a series of reports circulated throughout the Agency. These reports are intended to strengthen staff engagement and commitment, while promoting the continuous improvement of the Agency's processes and activities. As noted above, meta-evaluation is carried out at three levels: Agency, process and project. The resulting improvement actions are recorded in the ÍCARUS platform (Improvement Actions), which is used to monitor AQU Catalunya's improvement plan. This plan brings together the actions arising from the reviews described above, as well as from the various internal and external audits and annual meta-evaluation processes relating to areas such as quality management, information security, data protection, risk management and financial management. The improvements identified during the review period are summarised below:

Table 12. Improvements identified during the review period

Source	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ¹⁹
Meta-evaluation	53	52	73	66	59
Internal/External audits	40	29	46	30	In progress
Risk treatment plan	5	7	7	10	4

¹⁸ Available for review during the site visit.

¹⁹ Improvements as of 31 May 2026.

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Source	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ¹⁹
Equality Plan	-	-	10	14	12
Other	16	4	10	3	9
Total	114	92	146	123	84

Source: AQU Catalunya

In addition to auditing its QISMS, the Agency also conducts a range of other audits to ensure compliance and effectiveness in areas such as transparency, data protection and website accessibility. The resulting improvement actions are likewise recorded in the ÍCARUS platform (Improvement Actions) and are incorporated into the process meta-evaluations described above.

Professional conduct and integrity

AQU Catalunya promotes professional conduct and integrity through the following mechanisms:

Code of Ethics (2019). AQU Catalunya has adopted a Code of Ethics based on a set of commitments that give practical effect to the values underpinning professional conduct. These include independence, integrity, diversity, dignity and impartiality. Before taking up their duties, all staff and collaborators are required to sign a declaration confirming their commitment to uphold the Agency's values. The Agency also provides training to staff and contributors on the application of the Code. Together, these measures help to ensure that everyone involved in the Agency's activities acts professionally and in accordance with ethical principles. Compliance with the values set out in the Code of Ethics also forms part of the annual performance appraisal.

Non-discrimination. The principle of impartiality is one of the ethical values and commitments to which staff subscribe. The Code of Ethics states: ***"Impartiality is the commitment to be objective and to act with equanimity. AQU Catalunya staff undertake to conduct their duties impartially and without discrimination. Reviewers and external experts and contributors undertake to carry out their work without any a priori assumption, to declare any conflict of interests and, where appropriate, to abstain from decision-making when a conflict of interest arises in quality assurance procedures and duties assigned to them by the Agency."***

In addition, following a process of collective bargaining, AQU Catalunya adopted its [2024–2027 Equality Plan](#) [CAT], which lays down measures relating to staff and also requires reports on the activities undertaken by the review commissions to incorporate the [gender perspective](#) (see [the CAIP's 2025 report](#) [CAT]). The Agency has also adopted the Measures for Equality and Non-Discrimination of LGBTI People at AQU Catalunya (2025–2027), which are intended to ensure that no member of this group is subject to discrimination within the Agency.

Communication with institutions

Through its documented procedures, the QISMS defines the communication to be maintained with the institutions and individuals subject to review in each area of activity (e.g. the external communication matrix).²⁰ In addition, AQU Catalunya involves its different stakeholder groups in its governing and advisory bodies. The Governing Board monitors the Agency's activities from the perspective of efficiency and effectiveness and considers strategic and institutional matters. The advisory bodies, such as the Vice Rectors Committee and the University QA Units Committee, focus on operational coordination and the exchange of information.

Outsourcing (Subcontracting)

AQU Catalunya does not outsource any quality assurance activities relating to the Catalan Higher Education System.

7.7. ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

STANDARD:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Since 2007, AQU Catalunya has undergone regular external reviews of its compliance with the ESG, coordinated by ENQA, enabling it to maintain its registration on EQAR. This commitment is not only voluntary but also a legal requirement under Article 26 of [Law 15/2015 on AQU Catalunya](#), which states: *"In accordance with international standards and guidelines for quality assurance, AQU Catalunya shall, at the proposal of the Governing Board, undergo a regular international external review of the quality of the services it provides for the purpose of the Agency's continuous improvement and external recognition."*

For AQU Catalunya, these reviews not only ensure continued compliance with the ESG but also provide a valuable opportunity for continuous improvement and reflection on its quality assurance activities.

Following each external review, the Agency systematically analyses the observations and recommendations made by the external review panel, the ENQA Board and EQAR. On the basis of this analysis, internal working groups comprising staff directly involved in quality assurance activities are established to identify key strengths, areas for improvement and opportunities for further development. This reflection results in an action plan, which is approved by the Agency's Executive Board and implemented

²⁰ Available for review during the site visit.

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during the subsequent review period. Progress in implementing the plan is monitored on a quarterly basis. The 2024–2027 Action Plan, developed in response to the 2022 targeted review, comprises 29 actions, four of which were subsequently discontinued. As of 31 March 2026, 77% of the remaining actions had been completed.

The [reports arising from AQU Catalunya's ESG reviews](#) are publicly available on the Agency's website.

Furthermore, AQU Catalunya has been aligned with the [INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice](#) since 2019. This recognition was renewed in 2022 and is valid until December 2027. Renewal is contingent on the prior recognition of the Agency through the ENQA external review process. Since being recognised by the WFME in 2021, AQU Catalunya has also submitted an annual monitoring report covering all activities, changes and outcomes relating to the international accreditation of medicine degree programmes.

In addition to these external reviews, the Agency undergoes a range of other audits on a regular basis, including ISO certification audits, financial audits, legal compliance audits, transparency audits and audits of compliance with data protection requirements.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE ESG

8.1. ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

STANDARD:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

AQU Catalunya carries out external quality assurance at both programme and institutional level, nationally and internationally (see Table 6, External quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG carried out by AQU Catalunya [2022–2026], page 30 of this report). Across all these activities, the Agency incorporates the principles of the ESG and uses the standards in Part 1 as the reference framework for assessing the quality of educational provision, its continuous enhancement and the effectiveness of internal quality assurance mechanisms.

This integration goes beyond a formal mapping between the ESG standards and the evaluation dimensions. It is reflected in the design of the methodologies, the criteria and evidence required, the analysis undertaken by the expert panels, and the formulation of conclusions, good practices, areas for improvement and recommendations arising from the external review processes. In programme reviews, the analysis focuses on the contribution of internal quality assurance mechanisms to the design, monitoring and improvement of degree programmes. In institutional reviews, it examines the robustness, coherence and effectiveness of those mechanisms in assuring and enhancing the quality of educational provision.

Annex 1 to this self-assessment report maps the standards in Part 1 of the ESG against the dimensions set out in the Agency's review guides. In addition, the document [Mapping of ESG standards \(Part 1\) to criteria and assessment methodologies](#) identifies the standards assessed, describes the methodologies used in each review process and explains how they contribute to compliance with the ESG. Together, these two documents demonstrate how the ESG are applied across the Agency's external quality assurance activities.

A significant development during the review period has been the adoption of the [QUALINS Framework \(2025\)](#), which replaces the [Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degrees](#) (2016) and promotes a more integrated approach to quality assurance. The QUALINS Framework fosters a culture of quality, institutional responsibility and the effective operation of internal quality assurance systems, placing higher education institutions at the centre

of responsibility for the quality of their educational provision and academic activities. It establishes that institutions should adopt a strategic approach to meeting the ESG and to assuring and enhancing the quality of their educational activities. Within this framework, AQU Catalunya's approach is grounded in the principle that external quality assurance should recognise and reinforce institutional responsibility rather than replace it. Accordingly, external review processes focus not simply on the formal existence of policies, mechanisms and procedures, but on the extent to which IQAS effectively support the quality of educational programmes and inform decision-making for continuous improvement.

AQU Catalunya's approach operates within a highly regulated national legal framework, which shapes the design and implementation of its external quality assurance processes. The QUALINS Framework seeks to make these processes more flexible, increase their added value and reduce the administrative burden, while maintaining alignment with both the ESG and the applicable legal framework. In doing so, it promotes a more integrated approach to external quality assurance, in which external review processes go beyond verifying compliance with formal requirements and instead assess and foster the maturity of universities' IQAS.

In 2022, the ENQA review panel recommended that AQU Catalunya give greater attention to student-centred learning by moving beyond a sole focus on the definition of learning outcomes and encouraging higher education institutions to develop innovative pedagogical approaches that help students to achieve those outcomes. AQU Catalunya has strengthened this aspect in the recent development of its methodological framework. The [QUALINS Framework](#) explicitly places students at the centre of the learning experience and recognises teaching staff as playing a key role in delivering high-quality, innovative and student-centred education. In addition, the [Standards and Criteria for the Institutional Accreditation of University Centres](#) and the [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees](#) include specific references to the promotion of innovative teaching practices, the use of new technologies, and methodologies that support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

In 2022, EQAR drew attention to the implementation of ESG Standard 1.9 in the Agency's review activities. AQU Catalunya addresses this standard through the dimensions relating to internal quality assurance systems. In particular, within IQAS certification (Dimension 2: Design, approval and monitoring of degree programmes) and institutional accreditation (Dimension 7: Implementation of the IQAS and academic outcomes), the standard is interpreted in terms of the ability of the IQAS to support the monitoring and continuous improvement of degree programmes.

8.2. ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

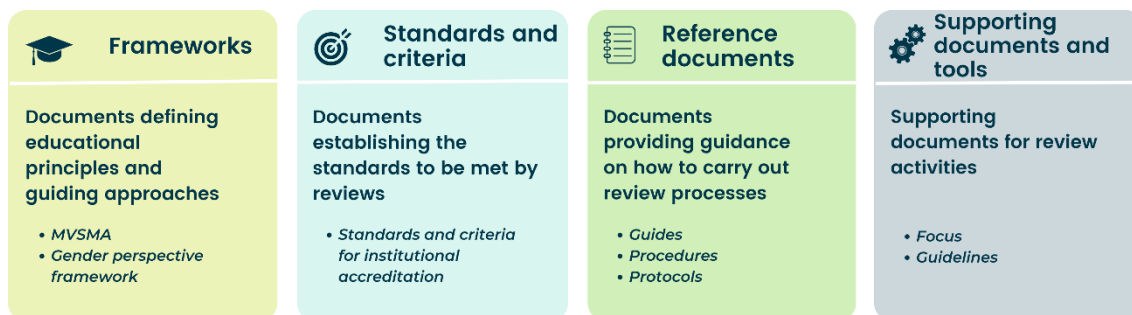
STANDARD:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

AQU Catalunya has extensive experience in the design and implementation of review processes, enabling it to develop methodologies that are fit for purpose, add value to the Catalan Higher Education System, and actively involve stakeholders in both their development and continuous improvement.

The Agency designs these methodologies in accordance with its Methodology Development and Management Procedure, which sets out the process for creating, updating, identifying and disseminating methodologies and supporting documents. It classifies its methodological documents as follows:

Figure 7. Structure of methodological documents



Source: AQU Catalunya

The procedure also establishes a five-year review cycle for methodological documents and defines the process for their revision. In particular, it includes an initial stage in which the Methodology Committee – comprising the director, the heads of the Quality Assurance Department, Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation Department and Assessment of Teaching Staff and Research Department, together with the methodological adviser and the internal quality manager – discusses and agrees upon the approach to developing and/or revising methodologies.

Each review process is supported by a review guide and a procedure, which are published as separate documents. While they follow a common structure, each also includes components specific to the review process concerned. In general, the documents are organised as follows:

- > **Guides:** introduction (objectives, reference framework and legal framework, structure of the guide, and the relationship between the review dimensions and the ESG); review dimensions; and annexes.
- > **Procedures:** introduction (scope and structure of the procedure); outcomes and decisions; review procedure (planning, application, review, decision-making, reporting, registration, appeals and process flowchart); publication and labels; follow-up and continuous improvement; and annexes.

The methodological documents conform to the applicable legal framework, the ESG, international practice (through the participation of international experts in the CAIP and the advice of the Advisory Commission), the Agency's own experience, and the agreements adopted within REACU. Methodologies are reviewed internally and also take into account the views of the various stakeholder groups:

Figure 8. Interaction with stakeholders



Source: AQU Catalunya

During the review period, the following initiatives are particularly noteworthy:

- > Workshops with universities: QUALINS Framework (7 March 2024); [discussion on institutional accreditation](#) (23 February 2026; see [video](#)).
- > Public consultations: certification of teaching staff performance assessment processes; consultations on the subject benchmark statements.
- > Pilot projects: [pilot for the renewal of institutional accreditation \(2024\)](#); [pilot for the monitoring of institutional accreditation \(2024\)](#); [pilot guidelines for drafting the student report \(2024\)](#); and [focused validation pilot for institutionally accredited institutions \(2026\)](#).

Once a methodology has been formally approved, it is disseminated through the Agency's website, quarterly newsletter and social media channels ([X](#) and [LinkedIn](#)), ensuring that it is readily accessible to stakeholders. In some cases, dedicated workshops or information sessions are organised, for example on the [European Approach](#) [CAT] or to present the outcomes of the [pilot on the renewal and monitoring of institutional accreditation](#) [CAT]. For students, AQU Catalunya and the Catalan University Student Council (CEUCAT) jointly organise [student training on quality assurance in higher education](#) [CAT], including a workshop on preparing the student report for institutional accreditation. This helps to ensure that stakeholders, external reviewers and the institutions concerned all have a clear understanding of the purpose, objectives and methodology of the review before the process begins.

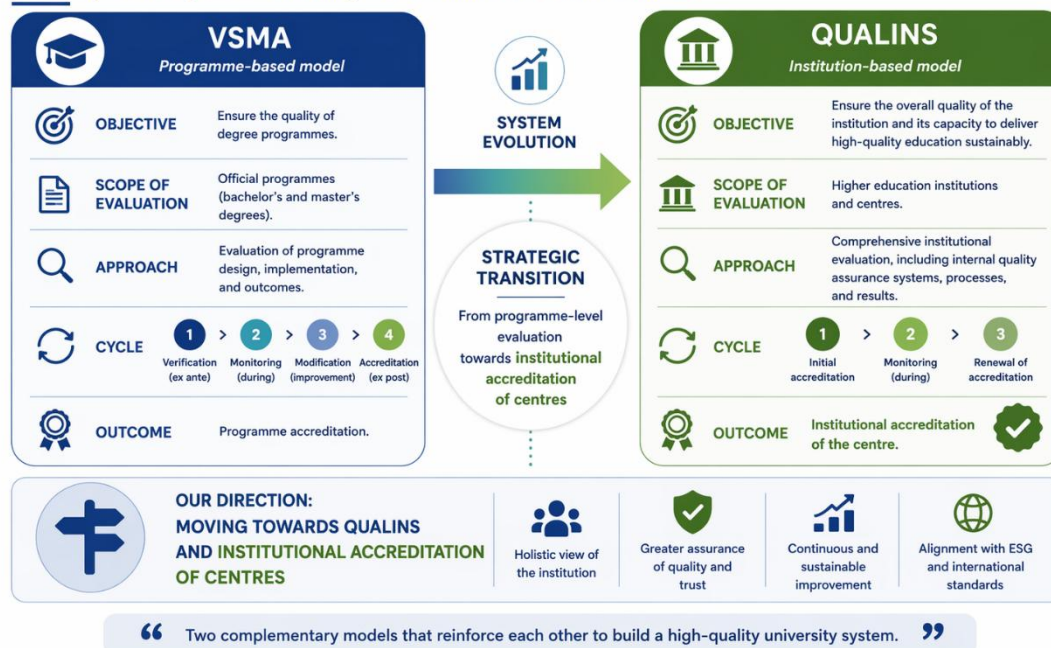
At the end of each review process or review cycle, AQU Catalunya systematically carries out meta-evaluations to assess its effectiveness (see Section 7.6, ESG Standard 3.6, of this report). These meta-evaluations consider stakeholder satisfaction gathered through meetings and surveys, as well as the outcomes of the process and proposals for future improvements. The Agency conducts meta-evaluations across all its activities, reviewing, among other aspects, the relevance of each review process.

AQU Catalunya takes into account the workload and costs that review processes impose on higher education institutions, particularly in a context where legal requirements have led to a substantial increase in the number of external quality assurance processes. It also considers the views and needs of higher education institutions when designing methodologies and identifying ways to make external quality assurance more flexible and less burdensome. A major development in this regard was the adoption of the [QUALINS Framework](#) in April 2025, following an extensive process of consultation and reflection with stakeholders. Its principal innovation is the emphasis on institutional-level external quality assurance. This change aims to simplify review processes for universities and make them easier for society to understand.

Figure 9. MVSMA vs QUALINS Framework

VSMA vs QUALINS

Two complementary models evolving towards **institutional accreditation**



Source: AQU Catalunya

The [QUALINS Framework](#) includes a range of measures to be implemented. In 2026, the Agency approved a pilot for the focused validation of recognised degree programmes in institutionally accredited institutions, with the aim of streamlining the review process and avoiding overlapping assessments of certain aspects. In addition, the [Guide to the design, validation and modification of recognised bachelor's and master's degree programmes](#) was revised in 2022 to reduce the amount of information that universities are required to provide in specific sections. AQU Catalunya is pursuing a strategy of integrating review processes at institutional level to avoid requiring universities to address the same issues in multiple review processes, recognising that internal quality assurance systems are the cornerstone of the quality of educational provision. The Agency is committed to continuing this approach while ensuring full compliance with the applicable legal framework.

The review processes designed by AQU Catalunya are ultimately intended to enhance the quality of teaching and learning while fostering a culture of quality within higher education institutions. They also examine whether degree programmes are aligned with the needs of society and the labour market, as this is a key objective of quality assurance processes and an aspect that AQU Catalunya assesses on a regular basis through the involvement of experts from a range of professional and academic fields. Both the review processes required by the legal framework and the voluntary processes designed and implemented by the Agency enable institutions to demonstrate their progress in the continuous improvement of their degree programmes and internal quality assurance systems. Accordingly, review reports

identify the aspects that institutions should address through their internal quality assurance systems. The associated procedures also specify the follow-up actions required of institutions in each case.

As explained above, the Agency has developed a structured set of methodological documents, including a number of key publications that provide guidance to universities on quality assurance. Among the most important are:

- > [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees.](#)
- > [Standards and criteria for the institutional accreditation of university centres.](#)
- > [Subject benchmark statements for the design and validation of degree programmes.](#)
- > [Tools for university quality.](#)

8.3. ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes

STANDARD:

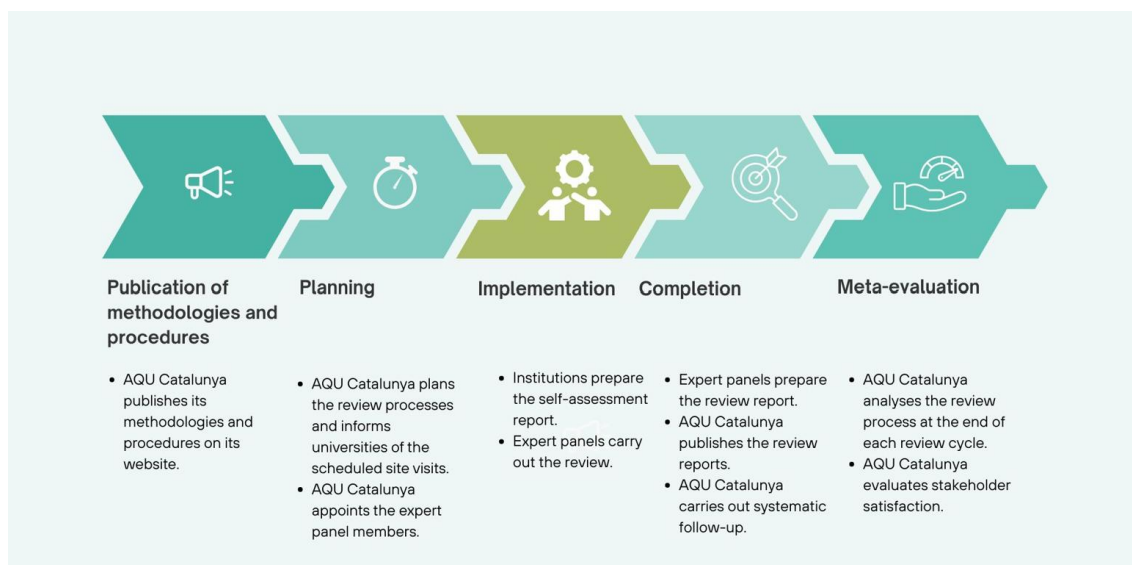
External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, consistently implemented and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

External quality assurance processes

AQU Catalunya's external quality assurance processes are carried out in accordance with the approved methodologies and procedures, which are published on the Agency's website and are available for consultation and download. Reviews are planned in accordance with the Agency's internal procedures for the review and accreditation of programmes and institutions. The figure below shows AQU Catalunya's model for implementing its review processes:

Figure 10. Model for implementing AQU Catalunya's review processes



Source: AQU Catalunya

All review processes include a self-assessment, an external review by an expert panel that includes a student member, a site visit (except where the review is based solely on documentary evidence), publication of a final report and, where applicable, a site visit report, and follow-up to assess the implementation of improvement actions. All review processes also provide for appeals to the Appeals Commission. The table below shows how the key principles are reflected in the implementation of the Agency's review processes.

Table 13. Alignment of the key principles underpinning the Agency's review processes

	SAR	External site visit	Publication	Follow-up	Student participation	Appeals
Programme reviews						
Validation	VR	n.a.	•	•	•	•
Modification	MR	n.a.	•	•	•	•
Accreditation	•	•	•	•	•	•
European Approach	•	•	•	•	•	•
Institutional reviews						
IQAS certification ²¹	•	•	•	•	•	•
Institutional accreditation	•	•	•	•	•	•
Review of teaching assessment handbooks ⁹	•	•	•	•	•	•

²¹ These review processes include an *ex ante* assessment of programme design.

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	SAR	External site visit	Publication	Follow-up	Student participation	Appeals
Institutions offering programmes under foreign education systems	•	•	•	•	•	•

Source: AQU Catalunya. VR: validation report (*ex-ante* accreditation); MR: modification report; n.a.: not applicable

AQU Catalunya's technical staff are responsible for ensuring that each methodology is applied consistently across all institutions participating in the same review process. They work closely together to ensure the consistent implementation of the Agency's review processes. A distinctive feature of AQU Catalunya's approach is that each higher education institution is assigned a technical staff member from the Quality Assurance Department, who acts as the institution's main liaison and supports it throughout the review process.

AQU Catalunya has designed a pilot review to assess the impact of institutional accreditation. The aim is to establish whether the institutions have undergone the expected changes and, if so, to what extent these can be attributed to institutional accreditation. The pilot is expected to be launched at the end of 2026.

Programme reviews

The validation (*ex-ante* accreditation), monitoring and modification of degree programmes are based on documentary reviews carried out by the specific review commissions (see Section 8.4, ESG Standard 2.4, of this report) and therefore do not include a site visit.

By contrast, [programme accreditation and the accreditation of international joint university programmes under the European Approach](#) include a site visit by an expert panel, which meets with the different stakeholder groups (e.g. teaching staff; students and graduates; technical, management and administrative staff; programme coordinators; and senior management). The expert panel prepares an evidence-based site visit report identifying good practices, requirements, areas for improvement and recommendations for the programme under review (see Section 8.5, ESG Standard 2.5, of this report).

Before issuing the final validation or modification report, the Agency provides the institution with a preliminary report, allowing it to address any identified shortcomings. In the case of site visit reports, institutions are given the opportunity to identify and comment on any factual errors before the report is finalised.

The [specific review commissions](#) prepare the review reports, which are published on AQU Catalunya's [EUC Informes](#) platform (together with the site visit report, where applicable) and in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR). For

international reviews, the reports are published on the AQU Catalunya [website](#) and in the [DEQAR](#).

The decisions adopted may be appealed before the Appeals Commission (see Section 8.7, ESG Standard 2.7, of this report).

Degree programmes accredited with conditions, international joint university programmes, and degree programmes that have undergone validation (*ex-ante* accreditation) for which requirements or areas for improvement have been identified are subject to follow-up three years after the review report is issued. In certain cases, the specific review commissions may also require follow-up in light of the scope of the proposed modification. This enables institutions to demonstrate their progress in the continuous improvement of their degree programmes and internal quality assurance systems.

AQU Catalunya's role concludes with the issuance of the final report. In the case of validation, modification and accreditation, the Council of Universities or the Arts Higher Education Council is responsible for formally granting validation or accreditation or, in the case of university degree programmes, authorising modifications.

Institutional reviews

The processes for IQAS certification, institutional accreditation and the review of institutions offering programmes under foreign education systems include a site visit by an expert panel, which meets with the different stakeholder groups (e.g. teaching staff; students and graduates; technical, management and administrative staff; programme coordinators; and senior management). The expert panel prepares an evidence-based site visit report identifying good practices, requirements, areas for improvement and recommendations for the programme under review (see Section 8.5, ESG Standard 2.5, of this report).

A distinctive feature of institutional accreditation is the inclusion of an [independent report prepared by students](#) at the institution, which accompanies the self-assessment report as complementary evidence. This initiative was introduced with the participation of AQU Catalunya's Student Advisory Committee and the Catalan University Student Council (CEUCAT).

Before the site visit report is finalised, institutions are given the opportunity to identify and comment on any factual errors.

The [Specific Commission for Institutional Assessment](#) prepares the review reports, which are published on AQU Catalunya's [EUC Informes](#) platform (together with the site visit report, where applicable) and in the DEQAR. For international reviews, the reports are published on the AQU Catalunya [website](#) and in the [DEQAR](#).

The decisions adopted may be appealed before the Appeals Commission (see Section 8.7, ESG Standard 2.7, of this report).

Institutionally accredited institutions, those offering programmes under foreign education systems, and teaching assessment handbooks for which requirements or areas for improvement have been identified are subject to follow-up three years after the review report is issued. The institutional accreditation monitoring also covers the implementation of the requirements and areas for improvement identified during IQAS certification. This enables institutions to demonstrate their progress in the continuous improvement of their degree programmes and internal quality assurance systems.

AQU Catalunya's role concludes with the issuance of the final report. In the case of institutional accreditation, the Council of Universities formally grants institutional accreditation.²² For the review of institutions offering programmes under foreign education systems, AQU Catalunya's role likewise concludes with the issuance of the final report, while the authorisation is granted by the Catalonia ministry for universities.

8.4. ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts

STANDARD:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

In accordance with the ESG (2015), AQU Catalunya involves external experts, distinguished members of the academic and professional communities, and students in its external quality assurance processes, while ensuring their independence, objectivity and the absence of any conflicts of interest.

Profile of experts

AQU Catalunya maintains a [pool of reviewers](#), managed through its in-house NOSTRUM application, to which any individual meeting the eligibility requirements may apply. The pool of reviewers is publicly accessible through the Agency's website.

To join the pool, all new reviewers are required to submit their CV in AQU Catalunya's standard electronic format. Between 2022 and 2026, a total of 1,837 experts²³ participated in the Agency's review processes, 52% of whom were women. The profile,

²² For arts higher education institutions, although the Catalan Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has formally requested this from its Spanish counterpart, the institutional accreditation process has not yet begun.

²³ Annual headcount. The same expert may be counted in more than once within the same year.

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origin and role of the experts involved in ESG external quality assurance activities during the review period are shown below:

Table 14. Experts by origin and year participating in AQU Catalunya's ESG review processes

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ²⁴
Catalonia	145	126	103	125	66
Rest of Spain	331	275	253	251	107
International	7	10	21	14	3
Total	483	411	377	390	176

Source: AQU Catalunya

Table 15. Experts by role and year participating in AQU Catalunya's ESG review processes

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ²⁵
Academic	285	240	226	231	105
Professional	105	93	79	75	35
Student	93	76	71	84	36
Total	483	411	377	390	176

Source: AQU Catalunya

Selection

AQU Catalunya initially selects experts from its [pool of reviewers](#), which currently contains approximately 30,000 records. Where no suitable candidates are available, the Agency undertakes an active search through publicly available sources and the professional networks of experts and universities outside Catalonia. For reviews conducted under the European Approach, AQU Catalunya also seeks the support of the quality assurance agencies in the countries participating in the consortium.

With regard to student reviewers, AQU Catalunya promotes their inclusion in the pool through [quality assurance training courses](#) [CAT] ([video](#)[CAT]), the Student Advisory

²⁴ Figures as of 31 May 2025.

²⁵ Figures as of 31 May 2025.

Committee and its collaboration with the Catalan University Student Council (CEUCAT). Since 2022, the Agency has also maintained a [collaboration agreement with the European Students' Union \(ESU\)](#) to promote student participation in international review processes (the agreement is currently being renewed). Students who meet the eligibility criteria are selected to serve on review panels.

When selecting experts, AQU Catalunya takes into account both the [reviewer profiles and eligibility criteria](#) published on its website and the specific requirements of each review. External experts participating in the review of programmes and institutions are appointed by the president of the Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP).

Independence and conflicts of interest

AQU Catalunya has two mechanisms in place to prevent conflicts of interest:

- > Experts are required to sign a declaration confirming their commitment to comply with the Agency's principles of conduct, values, Code of Ethics, and Quality and Information Security Policy. They also receive training on these matters as part of the induction process.
- > The representatives of the programme or institution under review may identify potential conflicts of interest during the selection phase, before experts are formally appointed.

Table 16. Experts challenged in relation to the total number of experts appointed to participate in review processes (2022–2026)

	Experts appointed	Experts challenged	% challenged
2022	483	3	< 1%
2023	411	1	< 1%
2024	377	3	< 1%
2025	390	2	< 1%
2026* ²⁶	176	0	0%

Source: AQU Catalunya

To promote transparency, the Agency publishes the [list of experts who have collaborated in its review activities](#) annually on its corporate website.

²⁶ Figures as of 31 May 2026.

Training

Once experts have been selected and formally appointed, they participate in at least one training session before beginning the review. AQU Catalunya also provides supporting materials and explanatory videos on the review methodologies.

The training sessions follow a common structure, covering the context of the review, the review procedure, the methodology and, where appropriate, practical case studies. Depending on the type of review, sessions last between three and five hours.

Throughout the review process, experts are supported by AQU Catalunya's technical staff, who are available to resolve any methodological queries.

To keep reviewers' knowledge up to date, AQU Catalunya organises seminars on current topics, to which they are invited (see Annex 3 to the self-assessment report).

The Agency is currently developing an online learning environment to enhance the training process.

Table 17. Training sessions organised during the review period

	Number of sessions	Number of experts trained
2022	18	247
2023	22	161
2024	19	419
2025	15	137
2026 ²⁷	27	62

Source: AQU Catalunya

Composition

The composition of external review panels is defined in the relevant section of the review procedures. The standard composition of an external review panel is as follows:

- > A chair from the relevant field of knowledge and/or with institutional or management experience.
- > An academic member from the field(s) of the degree programme(s) under review or from the institution's field of knowledge.
- > A professional member from the institution's field of knowledge.
- > A student member from the institution's field of knowledge.
- > A secretary with expertise in review methodology.

²⁷ Figures as of 31 May 2026.

The composition of the panels may vary depending on the type of review being carried out. Professional members participate in all external quality assurance procedures, unless their involvement would not be appropriate for the purpose and objectives of the review. This is the case for the review of teaching assessment handbooks.

Performance review

AQU Catalunya manages the participation of its experts and, at the end of each assignment, evaluates their performance. The evaluation considers technical expertise, reliability, responsibility, the quality of the review report, professional conduct and other relevant aspects, ensuring that the reviewer pool continues to comprise the most suitable profiles.

Once the review has been completed, experts are invited to complete a satisfaction survey to gather their views on the review process. The results are analysed as part of both the annual meta-evaluation of the department and the meta-evaluation of the corresponding project. In addition, the views of the universities' quality assurance units are gathered on the different review processes.

The management of experts is governed by a set of internal procedures, which are reviewed and updated periodically.

8.5. ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

STANDARD:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

All of AQU Catalunya's external quality assurance processes are supported by publicly available guides and procedures, whether or not they involve decision-making.

The review guides set out the dimensions and sub-dimensions of analysis based on quality standards and sub-standards. They also specify the associated evidence and indicators, together with the assessment rubrics used to determine the level of achievement.

To ensure methodological consistency and comparability across review processes, AQU Catalunya has established a common framework of standards and criteria for [institutional reviews](#) and for the [review of bachelor's and master's degree programmes](#), which are among the most significant quality assurance processes in the Catalan Higher Education System. This framework is operationalised through the review guides, which translate it into dimensions tailored to each review procedure, ensuring the consistent application of the criteria while taking account of the specific context of each review.

The guides and procedures define the methodological requirements and procedural aspects of each review process, ensuring that both experts and the institutions under review have a clear and shared understanding of the scope of the review, the applicable criteria and the review procedure. As described under Section 8.2, ESG Standard 2.2, the review criteria take into account the applicable legal framework, the ESG, international practice, the Agency's experience and the agreements adopted within REACU.

To ensure consistency in the application of the review outcomes, AQU Catalunya provides training for experts (see Section 8.4, ESG Standard 2.4, of this report) with the aim of promoting a common understanding of the scope and objectives of the review, together with shared guidance on the application of the methodology and the review criteria. These training sessions include practical case studies.

In addition, review reports undergo a technical review done by the project managers before they are submitted to the review commissions or sent to the institutions concerned, thereby ensuring a consistent interpretation of the review criteria and that the assessment is supported by appropriate evidence.

Each specific review commission is supported by a secretary drawn from AQU Catalunya's technical staff. In addition to their formal responsibilities, secretaries help ensure the consistent application of the review criteria across all commissions. For programme review panels, the secretary role is generally carried out by external experts. By contrast, for institutional reviews, given their greater complexity and strategic nature, the secretary role is undertaken by members of the Agency's technical staff. Whenever the secretary role is assigned to an external expert, they receive extensive and specialised training to ensure a consistent and harmonised approach to the review process. External secretaries also receive dedicated support from AQU Catalunya's technical staff, reinforcing the integrity, reliability and consistency of the reviews.

As described under Section 8.2, ESG Standard 2.2, the Agency's technical staff coordinate closely to ensure the consistent implementation of its review processes. For example, a dedicated wiki has been introduced for the validation process to share guidance on methodological queries. These coordination meetings provide an opportunity to discuss issues requiring a common approach, such as new regulatory requirements or novel cases submitted by institutions for the first time. For example, the Agency's technical staff have held dedicated internal meetings to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the institutional accreditation renewal process.

As an additional measure to promote quality and consistency, new technical staff initially participate in review processes as observers before taking on the role of secretary to a review commission or external review panel. They are supported through a structured mentoring arrangement with more experienced colleagues.

AQU Catalunya also gathers regular feedback from universities and experts on its review processes.

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One indication that the review criteria are explicit, well understood and applied consistently is the low number of appeals. During the review period, universities lodged 12 appeals relating to programme reviews (validation, accreditation and the European Approach), out of a total of 772 review outcomes that could potentially have been appealed (1.5%). Following an independent review of these cases by external experts, including a student member, the Appeals Commission has upheld all the procedures and decisions adopted by the specific review commissions, except in one case, where the appeal was only partially upheld. To date, no appeals have been lodged in relation to institutional review processes.

Table 18. Review process outcomes (2022–2026)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ²⁸
PROGRAMME REVIEWS					
Validation	51 (7)	91 (5)	75 (3)	85 (13)	117 (*)
Modification	182 (0)	97 (1)	169 (4)	246 (5)	274 (2*)
Accreditation	160 (0)	85 (0)	60 (1)	60 (0)	72 (*)
Accreditation of short learning programmes: review of designs and implementation proposals	6 (0)	–	–	–	Discont inued
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS					
IQAs certification	13 (0)	8 (0)	16 (0)	9 (0)	6 (*)
Institutional accreditation					
<i>Initial accreditation</i>	11 (0)	13 (0)	13 (0)	12 (0)	8 (*)
<i>Accreditation renewal</i>	–	1 (0)	–	10 (0)	14 (*)
Accreditation of teaching assessment handbooks	–	2 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	–
INTERNATIONAL REVIEWS					
Joint programmes (European Approach)	–	2 (0)	2 (0)	4 (0)	1 (*)
Joint European Degree Label (pilot)					2
Medicine degree programmes accredited against the Basic Standards for Medical Education	2 (0)	–	1 (0)	2 (0)	–
Validation	2 (0)	–	–	–	6 (*)
IQAS certification	–	–	–	1 (0)	1 (*)

²⁸ Figures as of 31 May 2026.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 ²⁸
Review of institutions offering foreign degrees	1 (0)	1 (1)	1 (0)	3 (1)	1 (*)

(): Unfavourable outcomes; (*) Call for applications not yet closed.

Source: AQU Catalunya

8.6. ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting

STANDARD:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

In the 2022 review, both the review panel and EQAR recommended “*expanding the level of detail and analysis in reports for SLPs to facilitate the usability by various stakeholders and to reflect the detailed evaluation work of the experts*”. AQU Catalunya addressed this recommendation in the reports on [Automotive and Sustainable Mobility](#) and [Renewable Energy](#).

Clear and accessible reports

The Agency ensures that its reports are clear and accessible through a range of structural and procedural mechanisms. First, all reports follow a standardised structure, defined in the review procedures, which includes the context, the methodology applied, the results obtained, the conclusions, examples of good practice and follow-up actions. This structure facilitates understanding by the different target audiences.

In addition, the Agency’s technical staff are responsible for ensuring that the language and style are appropriate, consistent and accessible, and tools such as assessment rubrics are used to reinforce the consistency and clarity of the reports.

No report is published until it has been reviewed by AQU Catalunya’s technical staff and approved by the relevant panel or commission, since the reports are authored by the experts.

Publication of reports

All reports issued by AQU Catalunya’s review commissions are published, regardless of whether the outcome is favourable or unfavourable.

Reports relating to programmes and institutions within the Catalan Higher Education System are published on the [EUC Informes](#) portal, AQU Catalunya’s repository of review reports. In 2025, the Agency [redesigned the portal](#) to simplify its interface and

improve report searches. The updated portal reinforces AQU Catalunya's longstanding commitment to transparency, public information and accessibility. It also allows users to perform customised searches and retrieve the latest reports for a particular institution or degree programme, for example by filtering results according to the date of publication.

The reports on the following assessment programmes are published on the AQU Catalunya corporate website:

- > [Assessment of institutions delivering foreign degrees in Catalonia](#)
- > [Assessment of degree programmes from universities outside Catalonia](#)
- > [Assessment of centres outside Catalonia](#)
- > [Assessment of micro-credentials](#)

AQU Catalunya was one of the agencies that actively contributed to the EQAR project establishing DEQAR between 2018 and 2020, and subsequently collaborated in the DEQAR CONNECT project. The Agency currently uploads validation, modification, accreditation and institutional accreditation reports to DEQAR automatically, while other types of reports are uploaded manually. To date, it has published 5,323 reports relating to 248 institutions.²⁹

EUC portal

In 2016, now 10 years ago, AQU Catalunya launched the EUC Estudis portal, a public information and guidance platform on the quality of higher education in Catalonia. It provides objective information on degree programmes, the institutions offering them and the outcomes of the surveys coordinated by the Agency. The aim is to assist prospective students, their families and other stakeholders in making informed decisions when choosing a degree programme.

This platform currently comprises:

- > [EUC Estudis](#): an information portal presenting all active bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD programmes in the Catalan Higher Education System. For each programme, it provides basic descriptive information, the results of the Agency's review processes (including a link to the corresponding EUC Informes entry), data from the graduate employment and graduate satisfaction surveys, and indicators on admissions, enrolment, academic outcomes and teaching staff. Its purpose is to provide comprehensive information on the quality of each degree programme.

²⁹ Source: DEQAR (figures as of 31 May 2026).

- > **EUC Informes**: a platform on which AQU Catalunya publishes all review reports relating to degree programmes and institutions in the Catalan Higher Education System.
- > **EUC Dades**: a repository of the results of the employment outcome and graduate satisfaction surveys by degree programme.

As part of AQU Catalunya's strategic shift towards institutional accreditation, the Agency is currently developing the EUC Centres platform to increase the visibility of the results of its institutional review activities.

These platforms are intended to serve as a tool for transparency and accountability, providing the Catalan public and the international community with information on the quality of higher education institutions and their educational provision. Their purpose is to ensure that stakeholders have access to relevant and reliable information to support informed decision-making through an integrated environment that brings together and presents the results of the Agency's reviews in a structured and accessible way.

8.7. ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals

STANDARD:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Complaints

AQU Catalunya has a publicly available complaints procedure. It enables any individual to raise concerns about the way the Agency performs its duties, the conduct of its staff or of individuals acting on its behalf (e.g. members of review commissions and panels), or any inaccurate information provided by the Agency. The procedure does not apply to complaints concerning the outcomes of review processes, which must instead be handled through the appeals procedure established for the relevant review process. To facilitate the submission of complaints, AQU Catalunya provides an online [User Support](#) mailbox on its website.

Complaints must be properly substantiated and supported by verifiable facts, evidence or specific examples. AQU Catalunya will therefore not consider complaints that are manifestly unfounded or expressed in offensive or abusive terms. Anonymous complaints are also not accepted. Once a complaint has been accepted for consideration, the Agency analyses the underlying causes or issues and responds to the complainant within ten days.

For complaints directly related to the conduct of staff or to the review activities, tools or processes carried out by AQU Catalunya, the following procedure applies: once a

complaint has been received, the head of internal quality assurance, together with the relevant department, analyses its content, identifies the underlying cause and, where appropriate, takes immediate action to address it. An initial response is provided to the complainant within ten days. Where the nature of the complaint requires it, preventive or improvement actions may also be introduced to prevent recurrence or strengthen the affected process. In such cases, responsibility for implementing and monitoring these actions rests with the head of the relevant department.

For complaints not directly related to AQU Catalunya's review activities, tools or processes, the head of the Quality Assurance Department first determines whether the complaint is connected to a review process and if it may constitute relevant evidence regarding the degree programme or the institution's IQAS. For a complaint to be considered, the complainant must demonstrate that they have previously used the institution's own complaints procedure and agree that the complaint may be forwarded to that institution.

Complaints are recorded in the Agency's internal quality records. At regular meetings, the Quality Management and Information Security Committee reviews complaints and proposed actions and assesses the effectiveness of completed actions.

Each year, the head of internal quality assurance compiles a summary of complaints so that they can be considered as evidence in future reviews. All complaints were addressed, and the lessons learned were incorporated into the improvement of subsequent processes. AQU Catalunya improved the structure and information available on its website regarding the complaints process, which has increased in 2026 students' awareness of the Agency and its complaints procedures.

Table 19. Complaints relating to review processes (2022–2026)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Complaints directly related to review processes	0	2	0	1	0
Complaints indirectly related to review processes	1	6	4	7	11

Source: AQU Catalunya

Appeals

Since 2015, the Appeals Commission has been responsible for reviewing and deciding on appeals lodged against decisions taken by the Agency's bodies in relation to review, certification and accreditation procedures.

The Commission's [rules of procedure](#) govern its composition, functions, meeting schedule, the exercise of its responsibilities, and the replacement of the president and members where necessary. They also regulate the responsibilities of the president and the secretary, the convening of meetings, and the adoption and recording of decisions. Once approved, the minutes are published on the Agency's website in accordance with the applicable legislation on transparency, personal data protection, and AQU Catalunya's review, certification and accreditation procedures.

The [procedure](#) for deciding on appeals lodged against decisions taken by the Agency's bodies establishes two types of procedure:

1. **Appeal decisions:** AQU Catalunya has its own procedure for deciding on appeals lodged against review outcomes, with the decision formally notified to the individuals or institutions concerned. Decisions of the Appeals Commission conclude the administrative procedure, without prejudice to the right to seek judicial review before the competent courts.
2. **Review reports:** These form part of an inter-administrative review procedure in which the Appeals Commission provides an opinion at the request of another public authority or public body. Depending on the applicable legal framework, the opinion may or may not be binding on the authority responsible for adopting the final administrative decision.

The documents accompanying the review processes include explicit references to these procedures, ensuring consistency, transparency and traceability.

Table 20. Appeals lodged by universities and their outcomes (2022–2026)

	2022		2023		2024		2025		2026 ³⁰	
	Received	Upheld	Received	Upheld	Received	Upheld	Received	Upheld	Received	Upheld
Validation	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	–	0	–
Accreditation	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	–	0	–
European Approach	0	0	1	1*	0	0	0	–	0	–
Total	1	1	8	1	3	0	0	–	0	–

Source: AQU Catalunya / * Appeal partially upheld.

³⁰ Figures as of 31 May 2026.

9. ESG COMPLIANCE: PILOT REVIEWS FOR THE JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL

9.1. Background

At the end of March 2026, AQU Catalunya was invited to participate in a European Commission technical support initiative aimed at quality assurance agencies interested in contributing to the development and implementation of the Joint European Degree Label (JEDL). AQU Catalunya expressed its interest in joining the initiative, both because of its alignment with the activities being carried out as part of the ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PI-FORWARD-HE-EDPP project (European Degree Pathway Projects, Topic 1) and because of its potential to strengthen the Agency’s expertise and institutional preparedness for future challenges related to the review of European joint programmes. Subsequently, the European Commission informed AQU Catalunya that, together with UNIBASQ, it was one of only two Spanish quality assurance agencies selected to participate in the technical support initiative.

The technical support provided by the European Commission took the form of pilot reviews of compliance with the Joint European Degree Label criteria, based on the operational guide developed under the Policy Lab initiative. Given the strategic importance of the initiative and its relevance to the development of future European quality assurance frameworks, AQU Catalunya undertook two pilot reviews, with UNIBASQ participating as an observer.

9.2. Pilot characteristics

Table 21. Pilot characteristics

Methodology	Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label ³¹
Programme	Previously evaluated under the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
Review	The review had a documentary focus, centring on the self-assessment report and supporting evidence submitted by the consortium. It followed the methodology and criteria established in the Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label.

³¹ European Commission. (2026). Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. DOI: 10.2766/7148441

For programmes previously evaluated under the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the synergies defined in the operational guide were applied, recognising criteria already covered by the European Approach, requiring supplementary evidence only where partial coverage existed, and undertaking a full assessment only for criteria not addressed by the European Approach.

9.3. Programme characteristics

Master's Degree in Global Challenges for Sustainability

Institutions	Universitat de Barcelona
	Trinity College Dublin
	Utrecht University
	Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
	Université de Montpellier
European University Alliance	Challenge-driven, Accessible, Research-Based and Mobile European University Alliance (CHARM-EU)
EQF level	7
ECTS credits	90

Master's Degree in Marine Biotechnology

Institutions	Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir, Spain
	Université de La Rochelle, France
	Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
	Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti, Romania
	Klaipėdos Universitetas, Lithuania
	Sveučilište u Zadru, Croatia
European University Alliance	European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS)
EQF level	7
ECTS credits	120

9.4. ESG compliance

The Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label sets out the label's key features and criteria, which *"guarantee the respect of the highest standards to offer transnational programmes, and showcase the specific European nature of such a*

label". These criteria were adopted in Annex II to the *Council Recommendation on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education*. They build on established tools of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), namely the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), the *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, and the *ECTS Users' Guide*.

The ESG provide the overarching framework for quality assurance in higher education. The European Approach applies these standards to the cross-border context of joint programmes through a single review procedure. The Joint European Degree Label builds on both instruments but does not replace them or existing quality assurance or accreditation standards or procedures. Instead, it verifies a set of criteria agreed at the EU level, assessing the "jointness", student experience and broader European dimension of the programme. Accordingly, this pilot review is aligned with the ESG.

Table 22. ESG compliance – JEDL pilot reviews

ESG	AQU Catalunya's compliance
ESG Part 3	AQU Catalunya meets all standards in Part 3 of the ESG. The pilot review relied on existing resources produced within the consortium's IQAs (aligned with the ESG and the standards of the European Approach).
2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance	See Table 23.
2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose	The criteria for the award of the Joint European Degree Label are set out in the <i>Council Recommendation on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education</i> and organised into two dimensions. Dimension A focuses on programme organisation, and Dimension B on key European values and priorities (see the Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label). AQU Catalunya provided feedback on the preliminary drafts through the consultation conducted by REACU.
2.3. Implementing processes	See Table 24.
2.4. Peer-review experts	Both panels comprised three international peer experts (Spain, Croatia and Austria) and a secretary from AQU Catalunya. All experts were carefully selected. The experts possessed the appropriate expertise and competencies to perform their role. In particular, they had knowledge on the European dimension of higher education. The Policy Lab offered a training session for the experts. AQU Catalunya explained its operating procedures (calendar, appointment procedure, etc.) and the characteristics of the pilot reviews.
2.5. Criteria for outcomes	The criteria are set out in the European Commission's <i>Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label</i> (published). AQU Catalunya also published comprehensive details on its website .

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ESG	AQU Catalunya's compliance
2.6. Reporting	AQU Catalunya published all reports, in keeping with its internal procedures.
2.7. Complaints and appeals	AQU Catalunya has complaints and appeals procedures in place that apply to these pilot reviews.

Table 23. Mapping grid - JEDL pilot

ESG	JEDL criterion
1.1. Policy for quality assurance	A.3. Joint arrangements for the joint programme A.4. Quality assurance arrangements A.4.1. Internal and external quality assurance
1.2. Design and approval of programmes	A.4. Quality assurance arrangements A.4.2. European Approach A.2. Transnational joint degree delivery A.2.1. Joint design and delivery A.2.4. Use of ECTS Users' Guide B.1. Interdisciplinarity and research-based learning B.2. Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability B.3. Digitalisation B.4. Values B.5. Multilingualism B.6. Inclusiveness B.7. Environmental sustainability
1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	A.2. Transnational joint degree delivery A.2.1. Joint design and delivery A.6. Student-centred learning A.8. Flexible and embedded student mobility B.2. Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability B.3. Digitalisation B.4. Values B.5. Multilingualism B.6. Inclusiveness B.7. Environmental sustainability
1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	A.2. Transnational joint degree delivery A.2.2. Joint degree A.2.3. Joint Diploma Supplement A.3. Joint arrangements for the joint programme A.9. Co-evaluation and co-supervision for dissertations
1.5. Teaching staff	A.7. Transnational campus – access to services B.6. Inclusiveness B.6.1. Diversity, equality, inclusion
1.6. Learning resources and student support	A.7. Transnational campus – access to services A.8. Flexible and embedded student mobility
1.7. Information management	A.5. Graduate tracking
1.8. Public information	A.4. Quality assurance arrangements A.4.1. Internal and external quality assurance

ESG	JEDL criterion
1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	A.4. Quality assurance arrangements A.4.1. Internal and external quality assurance A.4.2. European Approach
1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance	A.4. Quality assurance arrangements A.4.1. Internal and external quality assurance

Table 24. Alignment of key principles in the implementation of the JEDL

	SAR	External site visit	Publication	Follow-up	Student participation	Appeals
Joint European Degree Label	•	n.a.	•	•	•	•

Source: AQU Catalunya; n.a.: not applicable.

At the time the self-assessment report was submitted for approval, AQU Catalunya had not yet completed the review process. However, throughout the process and now that the panel reports are available, compliance with the ESG has been fully ensured. The Agency will continue to ensure full compliance with the ESG until the process is concluded.

10. SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis carried out as the basis for the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan is presented below. It draws on input gathered from stakeholders between November 2025 and February 2026.

Table 25. AQU Catalunya SWOT analysis, 2027–2030

Strengths (internal)	Weaknesses (internal)	Opportunities (external)	Threats (external)
Capacity to develop benchmark studies and methodologies	Bureaucratic burden and the complexity of processes	Participation in new projects to promote innovation and strategic diversification	Changes in the educational landscape that may undermine the credibility of current systems
Stable relationships and ongoing dialogue with the higher education system	Some routine reviews with limited added value	Development of new review strategies to improve efficiency and address emerging areas	Risks arising from accelerated digital transformation that may affect academic integrity
Recognition of the contribution of experts and a well-established reviewer pool	Delays in meeting the deadlines for some review processes	Digital transformation and the use of AI to optimise processes	Increasing pressure on the higher education system resulting from the review requirements established by the current regulatory framework
Rigour, objectivity and quality of review processes	Limited flexibility of processes due to the legal framework	Strengthening external communication to highlight the value of review outcomes	Unstable, ever-changing regulatory environment with a trend towards centralisation
Rigour, impartiality, technical independence and consistency in the application of review criteria	Early-stage use of artificial intelligence and slow process automation	Internationalisation and knowledge exchange	Increased external oversight and the risk of diverting the Agency from its core objectives
Transparency through the systematic publication of data and review results	Expert remuneration system	Strengthening talent management and professional development	Budgetary uncertainty due to budget extensions and resource constraints

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Strengths (internal)	Weaknesses (internal)	Opportunities (external)	Threats (external)
International recognition, leadership and reputation	Lack of a career development model and succession planning	Changes to public sector regulations to improve people management	Dependence on data from other public authorities and challenges related to data integration
Qualified, committed and service-oriented technical staff			Legislative diversity across countries and risks to European recognition
Positive working environment and stable workplace			
Source: AQU Catalunya			

AQU Catalunya will pursue the following priorities in its 2027–2030 Strategic Plan:

Strengths to maintain:

- > International recognition, leadership and reputation.
- > Capacity to develop benchmark studies and methodologies independently.
- > Qualified, committed and service-oriented technical staff.

Weaknesses to address:

- > Bureaucratic burden and the complexity of review processes.
- > The creation of a career development model and succession planning.

Opportunities to seize:

- > Development of new review strategies to improve efficiency and address emerging areas.
- > Participation in new projects to promote innovation and strategic diversification.
- > Digital transformation and the use of AI to optimise processes.
- > Strengthening external communication to highlight the value of review outcomes.

Threats to overcome:

- > Risks associated with accelerated digital transformation, such as threats to academic integrity.
- > Increasing pressure on the higher education system resulting from the review requirements established by the current regulatory framework.
- > Dependence on data from other public authorities and challenges related to data integration.

11. KEY CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

AQU Catalunya has identified a number of challenges that will guide or shape its strategic development over the coming years and in relation to which it seeks to play a proactive role.

The first challenge to be addressed – one shared across the entire higher education system – is the **emergence of artificial intelligence (AI)** in all areas of knowledge and university management. AI is profoundly transforming the way we teach, learn, assess, conduct research and assure the quality of our systems. In this context of rapid change, higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies have a responsibility to address these new challenges with a critical and rigorous approach and, above all, with a firm commitment to academic integrity. To this end, AQU Catalunya and the [Inter-University Council of Catalonia \(CIC\)](#) have organised the series [Quality and university integrity in the age of artificial intelligence](#) [CAT]. In addition to an introductory session providing an overview of the topic, the series will include four thematic sessions: research integrity, teaching integrity and new professional skills, students and learning with AI, and quality assurance. The aim is to create a shared space for reflection involving all stakeholders – including academics, technical and management staff, students, the Government of Catalonia and AQU Catalunya – on how to foster a culture of quality in an environment where opportunities coexist with technological risks. It also seeks to develop guidance for actors across the Catalan Higher Education System to overcome this new reality using shared and well-founded approaches. Alongside the implementation of the agreed guidance, the Agency will explore the use of AI to simplify and streamline its activities.

As a strategic priority, AQU Catalunya has identified **active participation in the implementation and, where appropriate, the further development of European methodologies such as the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and the future European Degree / European Degree Label**. In this regard, the Agency aims to play a proactive role as a facilitator and promoter of these instruments by encouraging their uptake and creating the conditions necessary for their effective implementation in ways that are appropriate to the context. Through this approach, AQU Catalunya seeks not only to align the Catalan Higher Education System with European priorities but also to contribute to the development of transferable methodological knowledge within the European Higher Education Area, thereby benefiting Catalan universities.

Beyond internationalisation, the Agency is also observing the growing importance of **cross-border education**, both as Catalan universities increasingly seek to offer degree programmes internationally and as new institutions look to establish themselves in

Catalonia. Although this development is still at an early stage in Catalonia, it presents new challenges that the Agency will need to address in a comprehensive manner.

Within Catalonia, the aim is to consolidate the QUALINS Framework while also pursuing a new line of development that is still at an early conceptual stage: **the evolution towards institutional accreditation models for universities, as the next step beyond the current system, which focuses on individual institutions**. In line with the ESG principles of efficiency, proportionality and continuous improvement, this evolution could support the development of more integrated review models based on the maturity of internal quality assurance systems, considering current trends such as online and hybrid learning and lifelong learning. In this context, the Agency intends to explore this development progressively through pilot approaches on an initially voluntary basis, enabling it to assess their feasibility, requirements and added value for the Catalan Higher Education System.

Finally, in light of the changing regulatory environment in Spain, it is important for AQU Catalunya to maintain an **appropriate balance between compliance with the legal framework and the relevance and added value of its review processes**. To this end, the Agency will continue to develop its methodologies so that they are useful to institutions and stakeholders alike, while making an effective contribution to continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

12. GLOSSARY

AHE: Arts Higher Education

AI: Artificial Intelligence

AQU Catalunya: Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency

CAIP: Institutional and Programme Review Commission

CEUCAT: Catalan University Student Council

CoARA: Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

DEQAR: Database of External Quality Assurance Results

DORA: San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

EHEA: European Higher Education Area

ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EQAR: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

ESG: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

GAIN: Global Academic Integrity Network

INQAAHE: International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

ISO: International Organization for Standardization

MVSMA: Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degrees

QISMS: AQU Catalunya's Quality and Information Security Management System

QUALINS: Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System

REACU: Spanish Network of University Quality Assurance Agencies

WFME: World Federation for Medical Education

13. HYPERLINKS INCLUDED IN THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The hyperlinks to external resources included in this self-assessment report are provided below:

13.1. AQU Catalunya corporate websites and social media

1. Website: [Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)³²
2. Website: [Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya \(EUC\)](#)
3. Website: [EUC Informes](#)
4. Website: [EUC Dades](#)
5. Social media account: [X](#)
6. Social media account: [LinkedIn](#)
7. Social media account: [YouTube](#)

13.2. Legislation

1. Website: [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#)
2. Legislation: [Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on Spanish universities](#) [ES]
3. Legislation: [Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities](#)
4. Legislation: [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)
5. Legislation: [Decree 315/2016, of 8 November, approving the Statute of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)
6. Legislation: [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](#)[ES]

³² The Catalan version is always the complete version.

7. Legislation: [Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, on the organisation of university education and its quality assurance](#) [ES]
8. Legislation: [Royal Decree 576/2023, of 4 July, amending Royal Decree 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating recognised PhD programmes; Royal Decree 1002/2010, of 5 August, on the issuance of recognised university degrees; and Royal Decree 641/2021, of 27 July, regulating the direct award of grants to Spanish public universities for the modernisation and digitalisation of the Spanish university system under the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan](#) [ES]
9. Legislation: [Law 1/2024, of 7 June, governing arts higher education and establishing the organisation and equivalence of professional arts education](#) [ES]
10. Legislation: [Royal Decree 611/2025, of 8 July, establishing the implementation timetable for Law 1/2024, of 7 June, governing arts higher education and the organisation and equivalence of professional arts education](#) [ES]
11. Legislation: [Royal Decree 905/2025, of 7 October, amending Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and other higher education institutions, and the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions; Royal Decree 1509/2008, of 12 September, regulating the Register of Universities, Institutions and Degrees; Royal Decree 1002/2010, of 5 August, on the issuance of recognised university degrees; and Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, on the organisation of university education and its quality assurance](#) [ES]

13.3. Governing and review bodies

1. Structure: [AQU Catalunya's organisational structure](#)
2. Legislation: [Internal rules of procedure of AQU Catalunya's Governing Board and its Standing Commission \(2015\)](#)
3. Legislation: [Open, competitive selection process for the appointment of the director of AQU Catalunya](#) [CAT]
4. Legislation: [Internal rules of procedure of the Institutional and Programme Review Commission \(2025\)](#)
5. Legislation: [Rules of procedure of the Research Assessment Commission \(2026\)](#)
6. Legislation: [Internal rules of procedure of AQU Catalunya's Appeals Commission \(2025\)](#)
7. Legislation: [Rules of procedure of the Advisory Commission \(2017\)](#)

13.4. Functions and activities

1. Website: [Programme review activities](#)

2. Agreement: [Memorandum of Understanding between AQU Catalunya and MusiQuE](#)
3. Website: [Institutional review activities](#)
4. Website: [European joint programmes under the European Approach](#)
5. Website: [Medicine degree programmes accredited against the Basic Standards for Medical Education](#)
6. Agreement: [University of Iceland to assess its Faculty of Medicine](#)
7. Website: [Collaboration agreement with the Balearic Agency](#)
8. Website: [Collaboration agreement with the Andorran Agency](#)
9. Website: [Joint European Degree Label](#)
10. Methodology: [Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label](#)
11. Website: [Review of institutions offering cross-border education](#)
12. Website: [Review of internal quality assurance systems \(IQAS\)](#)
13. Methodology: [International quality assurance of higher education. A tool for international academic mobility](#)
14. Document: [2023–2026 Strategic Plan](#)
15. Website: [University teaching staff assessment](#)
16. Website: [2025–2029 CoARA Action Plan](#)
17. Website: [surveys of the Catalan Higher Education System](#)
18. Website: [International projects](#)

13.5. References for ESG Part 3³³

13.5.1. Standard 3.1. Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

1. Document: [2023–2026 Strategic Plan](#)
2. Website: [AQU Catalunya's Code of Ethics \(2019\)](#)
3. Publication: [2024–2027 Equality Plan](#) [CAT]

³³ Links to legislation and to the rules of procedure of the Agency's commissions are provided in the preceding general sections. They are not repeated here, even where they are referred to in the individual ESG standards.

4. Website: [2025–2029 CoARA Action Plan](#)
5. Website: [Annual activity programme](#)
6. Website: [Annual activities and corporate social responsibility report](#)
7. Publication: [Meta-evaluation \(2025\)](#)
8. Document: [Schedule of external site visits \(2026\)](#) [CAT]
9. Website: [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System \(QUALINS Framework, 2025\)](#)
10. Website: [Institutional and Programme Review Commission](#)
11. Website: [Advisory Commission](#)
12. Website: [Quality and Information Security Management System](#)

13.5.2. Standard 3.2. Official status

1. Legislation: [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)
2. Legislation: [Decree 315/2016, of 8 November, approving the Statute of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)
3. Website: [Recognition by the World Federation for Medical Education](#)
4. Website: [European Approach](#)

13.5.3. Standard 3.3. Independence

1. Legislation: [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)

13.5.4. Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis

1. Website: [Publications finder](#)
2. News item: [New publications finder](#)
3. Website: [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System \(2025\)](#)
4. Website: [Subject benchmark statements for the design and validation of degree programmes](#)
5. Website: [Focus: Tools for university quality](#)
6. Website: [Reports from external quality review processes](#)
7. Website: [Thematic studies](#)

13.5.5. Standard 3.5 Resources

1. Website: [AQU Catalunya's Code of Ethics \(2019\)](#)
2. Document: [External financial audits of AQU Catalunya \(2025\)](#)³⁴

13.5.6. Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

1. Website: [Quality and Information Security Management System](#)
2. Document: [Quality and Information Security Policy](#)
3. Website: [Code of Ethics \(2019\)](#)
4. Document: [2024–2027 Equality Plan](#) [CAT]
5. Website: [AQU Catalunya's Gender perspective](#)
6. Document: [CAIP's 2025 gender report](#)

13.5.7. Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

1. Legislation: [Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency](#)
2. Website: [Reports arising from AQU Catalunya's ESG reviews](#)
3. Website: [INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice](#)

13.6. References for ESG Part 235

13.6.1. Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

1. Document: [Mapping of ESG standards \(Part 1\) to criteria and assessment methodologies](#)
2. Website: [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System \(2025\)](#)

³⁴ To access the document, it must be downloaded.

³⁵ Links to legislation and to the rules of procedure of the Agency's commissions are provided in the preceding general sections. They are not repeated here, even where they are referred to in the individual ESG standards.

3. Publication: [Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degrees \(2016\)](#)
4. Website: [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees](#)
5. Website: [Standards and Criteria for the Institutional Accreditation of University Centres](#)

13.6.2. Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

1. News item: [Discussion on institutional accreditation](#)
2. News item: [Pilot for the renewal of institutional accreditation \(2024\)](#)
3. Workshop: [Pilot for the monitoring of institutional accreditation \(2024\)](#)
4. News item: [Pilot guidelines for drafting the student report \(2024\)](#)
5. News item: [Focused validation pilot for institutionally accredited institutions \(2026\)](#)
6. Workshop: [European Approach for joint degree programmes](#)
7. Workshop: [Pilot for the renewal and monitoring of institutional accreditation](#)
8. Workshop: [Student training on quality assurance in higher education](#)
9. Publication: [Framework for enhancing the institutional quality of the Catalan Higher Education System](#)
10. Methodology: [Guide to the design, validation and modification of recognised bachelor's and master's degree programmes](#)
11. Methodology: [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees](#)
12. Methodology: [Standards and criteria for the institutional accreditation of university centres](#)
13. Methodology: [Subject benchmark statements for the design and validation of degree programmes](#)
14. Methodology: [Tools for university quality](#)

13.6.3. Standard 2.3 Implementing processes

1. Website: [Programme accreditation and the accreditation of international joint university programmes under the European Approach](#)
2. Website: [Specific review commissions](#)
3. Website: [EUC Informes](#)

4. Website: [website Assessment of degree programmes and institutions from universities outside Catalonia](#)
5. Website: [DEQAR](#)
6. Website: [Independent student report](#)

13.6.4. Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts

1. Website: [AQU Catalunya's Pool of reviewers](#)
2. Workshop: [Quality assurance training courses](#) [CAT]
3. Video: [Student training course \(2024\)](#) [CAT]
4. Document: [Collaboration agreement with the European Students' Union](#)
5. Document: [Reviewer profiles and eligibility criteria](#)
6. Website: [List of experts who have collaborated with AQU Catalunya](#)

13.6.5. Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

1. Website: [Standards and criteria for the institutional accreditation of university centres](#)
2. Website: [Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees](#)

13.6.6. Standard 2.6 Reporting

1. Report: [Automotive and Sustainable Mobility](#)
2. Report: [Renewable Energy](#)
3. News item: [AQU Catalunya Introduces the New Version of the EUC Informes](#)
4. Website: [Assessment of institutions delivering foreign degrees in Catalonia](#)
5. Website: [Assessment of degree programmes from universities outside Catalonia](#)
6. Website: [Assessment of centres outside Catalonia](#)
7. Website: [Assessment of micro-credentials](#)
8. Website: [EUC Informes](#)
9. Website: [EUC Estudis](#)
10. Website: [EUC Dades](#)

13.6.7. Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals

1. Website: [User Support](#)
2. Legislation: [Internal rules of procedure of AQU Catalunya's Appeals Commission \(2025\)](#)
3. Document: [Procedure for resolving Appeals](#)

13.7. ESG compliance: pilot reviews for the Joint European Degree Label

1. Methodology: [Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label](#)

14. ANNEX 1. CONSIDERATION OF ESG PART 1 IN THE REVIEW METHODOLOGIES

14.1. Programme review

Table 26. Consideration of ESG Part 1 in the review methodologies – Programme review

ESG		Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>Bachelor's / Master's</i>	Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>PhD</i>	Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>AHE</i>	Accreditation / Monitoring <i>Bachelor's / Master's / PhD / AHE</i>	European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
1.1.	Policy for quality assurance	8. Internal quality assurance system	8. Internal quality assurance system	3.9. Internal quality assurance system	1. Quality of the degree programme 3. Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system	9. Quality assurance
1.2.	Design and approval of programmes	1. Description, learning objectives and rationale for the degree programme 2. Outcomes of the teaching and learning process 4. Educational planning	1. Description of PhD programme 2. Competences	3.1. Degree description 3.2. Rationale 3.3. Competences 3.5. Educational planning	1. Quality of the degree programme	2.1. Learning outcomes – Level 2.3. Learning outcomes – Achievement 3. Study programmes 9. Quality assurance
1.3.	Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	4. Educational planning	4. Educational planning 5. Programme organisation	3.5. Educational planning	1. Quality of the degree programme 5. Effectiveness of learning support systems 6. Quality of the degree programme results	5. Learning, teaching and assessment 9. Quality assurance
1.4.	Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	3. Admission, recognition and mobility	3. Student access and admission	3.1. Degree description 3.4. Student access and admission	1. Quality of the degree programme 5. Effectiveness of learning support systems	4. Admission and recognition 9. Quality assurance
1.5.	Teaching staff	5. Academic and teaching support staff	6. Human resources	3.6. Academic and teaching support staff	4. Suitability of teaching staff for degree programme	7. Resources 9. Quality assurance

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ESG		Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>Bachelor's / Master's</i>	Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>PhD</i>	Validation (<i>ex-ante</i> accreditation) / Modification / Monitoring <i>AHE</i>	Accreditation / Monitoring <i>Bachelor's / Master's / PhD / AHE</i>	European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
1.6.	Learning resources and student support	6. Learning resources: materials, infrastructure, internships and services	7. Physical resources and available support for students	3.4. Student access and admission 3.5. Educational planning 3.7. Physical resources and services	5. Effectiveness of learning support systems	6. Student support 7. Resources 9. Quality assurance
1.7.	Information management	8. Internal quality assurance system	8. Programme review, improvement and results	3.8. Expected results 3.9. Internal quality assurance system	3. Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system 6. Quality of the degree programme results	9. Quality assurance
1.8.	Public information	8. Internal quality assurance system	8. Programme review, improvement and results	3.9. Internal quality assurance system	2. Relevance of public information	8. Transparency and documentation 9. Quality assurance
1.9.	On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	9. Internal quality assurance system	8. Programme review, improvement and results	3.8. Expected results 3.9. Internal quality assurance system	3. Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system	9. Quality assurance
1.10.	Cyclical external quality assurance	Procedure	Procedure	Procedure	Procedure	Procedure

14.2. Institutional review

Table 27. Consideration of ESG Part 1 in the review methodologies – Institutional review

ESG		IQAs certification	Institutional accreditation	Teaching assessment handbooks	Assessment of foreign institutions in Catalonia
1.1.	Policy for quality assurance	1. IQAS quality policy and effectiveness	1. Policies and strategy	C. Evaluation of mechanisms ensuring the transparency and dissemination of the assessment process D. Evaluation of the teaching assessment process and how criteria are applied	1. Policies and strategy

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ESG	IQAs certification	Institutional accreditation	Teaching assessment handbooks	Assessment of foreign institutions in Catalonia
1.2. Design and approval of programmes	2. Training programme design, approval and monitoring	2. Design, approval and implementation of training programmes	Not applicable	2. Design, approval and implementation of training programmes
1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	3. Teaching-learning and support for students	5. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Not applicable	5. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	3. Teaching-learning and support for students	3. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Not applicable	3. Student admission, progress, recognition and certification
1.5. Teaching staff	4. Teaching staff	4. Teaching staff	C. Evaluation of mechanisms ensuring the transparency and dissemination of the assessment process D. Evaluation of the teaching assessment process and how criteria are applied	4. Teaching staff
1.6. Learning resources and student support	3. Teaching, learning and student support 5. Learning resources and services	6. Learning and student support resources	Not applicable	6. Learning resources and student support
1.7. Information management	1. IQAS quality policy and effectiveness 2. Training programme design, approval and monitoring 3. Teaching, learning and student support 4. Teaching staff 5. Learning resources and services 6. Public information and accountability +++ (AHE) 6. Collection and analysis of results to improve study programmes	7. Implementation of the IQAS and academic results	B. Results data and assessment of the entire pre-accreditation period E. Reviewer satisfaction and results	7. Implementation of academic quality and results management systems
1.8. Public information	6. Public information and accountability +++ (AHE) 7. Public information and accountability	8. Public information	C. Evaluation of mechanisms ensuring the transparency and dissemination of the assessment process	8. Public information
1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	1. IQAS quality policy and effectiveness 2. Training programme design, approval and monitoring 3. Teaching, learning and student support	2. Design, approval and implementation of training programmes 7. Implementation of the IQAS and academic results	Not applicable	7. Implementation of academic quality and results management systems

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ESG		IQAs certification	Institutional accreditation	Teaching assessment handbooks	Assessment of foreign institutions in Catalonia
		4. Teaching staff 5. Learning resources and services 6. Public information and accountability +++ (AHE) 6. Collection and analysis of results to improve study programmes			
1.10.	Cyclical external quality assurance	Procedure	Procedure	Procedure	Procedure

15. ANNEX 2. LIST OF THEMATIC ANALYSES PUBLISHED BETWEEN 2022 AND 2026

15.1. Reports from external quality assurance processes

15.1.1. Degree programmes

- > Eduardo García Jiménez, José Gutiérrez Pérez and José Antonio Caride Gómez. 2023. [*Cross-sectional review report: Master's Degree in Educational Psychology*](#). With Dani Torrents Vilà and Albert Basart Capmany. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. [CAT]
- > Validation and accreditation of arts higher education programmes (2026, ongoing).

15.1.2. Institutions

- > Huertas-Hidalgo, Esther, Glòria González-Anadón and Caterina Cazalla-Lorite. 2022. [*Certification of internal quality assurance systems in the Catalan Higher Education System \(2016–2021\)*](#). Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. [CAT]
- > Analysis of the first two years of the implementation of institutional accreditation follow-up (2026, ongoing).

15.1.3. Teaching staff

- > Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. 2022. [*Gender perspective in teaching staff accreditation*](#). AQU Catalunya.
- > Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. 2022. [*Associate professor profiles \(2017–2019\)*](#). AQU Catalunya.
- > Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. 2023. [*Analysis of the age of applicants for teaching staff accreditation*](#). AQU Catalunya.
- > Research Assessment Commission. 2026. [*Report on the actions undertaken by the Research Assessment Commission on the gender perspective \(2024–2025\)*](#). Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

15.1.4. Processes

- > Edo-Ros, Carme, Concepción Herruzo-Fonayet and Esther Huertas-Hidalgo. 2022. [*Accreditation of PhD programmes at Catalan universities \(2018–2021\)*](#). Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

- > Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. 2022. [*Report on virtual external review visits*](#). Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Torrents-Vilà, Dani and Núria Mancho-Fora. 2024. [*Preliminary analysis of the use of artificial intelligence in programme accreditation*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot, Carme Edo-Ros and Conchita Herruzo-Fonayet. AQU Catalunya.
- > Cazalla-Lorite, Caterina. 2026. [*Integration of the gender perspective into the review of degree programmes*](#). With Mercè Gisbert-Cervera and Esther Huertas-Hidalgo. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

15.2. Thematic studies

15.2.1. Employment outcomes

- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2023. [*Employment outcomes of bachelor's degree graduates from Catalan universities*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot, Sandra Nieto-Viramontes, Dani Torrents-Vilà, Núria Mancho-Fora and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Torrents-Vilà, Dani. 2023. [*Employment outcomes of master's degree graduates of Catalan universities*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot, Sandra Nieto-Viramontes, José Luis Mateos-González, Núria Mancho-Fora and Jaume Valls-Pasola. AQU Catalunya.
- > Nieto-Viramontes, Sandra. 2023. [*Employment outcomes of doctoral graduates of Catalan universities*](#). With José Luis Mateos-González, Anna Prades-Nebot, Dani Torrents-Vilà, Núria Mancho-Fora and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2023. [*Employment outcomes of arts higher education graduates*](#). With Anna Prades Nebot, Sandra Nieto Viramontes, Dani Torrents Vilà, Núria Mancho Fora and Jaume Valls Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency. 2023. [*Results of the 2023 employment outcomes survey for environmental sciences graduates. Comparison of bachelor's degrees in Environmental Sciences in the Valencian Community and Catalonia*](#). AQU Catalunya
- > Mateos-González, José Luis and Anna Prades-Nebot. 2025. [*Equity in graduate employment outcomes and social mobility for Catalan on-campus universities \(2025\)*](#). With Sandra Nieto-Viramontes, Dani Torrents-Vila, Núria Mancho-Fora and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Employment outcomes of bachelor's degree graduates from Catalan universities (2026, ongoing)
- > Employment outcomes of master's degree graduates from Catalan universities (2026, ongoing)

- > Employment outcomes of doctoral graduates from Catalan universities (2026, ongoing)
- > Employment outcomes of arts higher education graduates (2026, ongoing)

15.2.2. Employers

- > Amat-Rodríguez, Jordi. 2022. [*Employability and university education in the field of Biosciences*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. AQU Catalunya.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2022. [*Employability and university education in the field of Psychology*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. AQU Catalunya.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2022. [*Employability and university education in the field of Economics and Business*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2022. [*Employability and university education in the field of Communication*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Amat-Rodríguez, Jordi. 2022. [*Employability and university education in the field of Pharmacy*](#). With José Luis Mateos-González, Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. AQU Catalunya.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2023. [*Employability and university education in the field of Production Engineering*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Amat-Rodríguez, Jordi. 2023. [*Employability and university education in the field of Construction*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Nieto-Viramontes, Sandra. 2024. [*Employability and university education in the field of Law*](#). With José Luis Mateos González, Anna Prades Nebot and Jaume Valls Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2025. [*Employability and university education in the field of Education*](#). With Anna Prades-Nebot and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Nieto-Viramontes, Sandra. 2025. [*Employers' opinion on university education*](#). With Anna Prades Nebot, José Luis Mateos González, Dani Torrents Vilà, Núria Mancho Fora and Jaume Valls Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

15.2.3. Satisfaction

- > Amat-Rodríguez, Jordi. 2022. [*Satisfaction of arts higher education \(AHE\) graduates*](#). With Núria Mancho-Fora, José Luis Mateos-González, Anna Prades-Nebot, Dani Torrents-Vilà and Jaume Valls-Pasola. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

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- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2026. [*Satisfaction of bachelor's degree graduates from Catalan universities \(2015–2023\)*](#). With Anna Prades Nebot. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2026. [*Satisfaction of master's degree graduates from Catalan universities \(2017–2023\)*](#). With Anna Prades Nebot. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.
- > Mateos-González, José Luis. 2026. [*Satisfaction with the gender perspective \(2026\)*](#). With Sandra Nieto Viramontes and Anna Prades Nebot. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

16. ANNEX 3. LIST OF EVENTS ORGANISED BY AQU CATALUNYA

During the period under review, the Agency organised the following events (the hyperlinks lead to the Catalan version of the website):

2026

- > [Employment outcomes 2026: Trends, results and challenges for the Catalan Higher Education System](#)
- > [Research integrity](#)
- > [Quality and university integrity in the age of artificial intelligence](#)

2025

- > [2025: Student training on quality assurance in higher education](#)
- > [Challenges of online assessment in higher education. Experiences and guidelines for improvement](#)
- > [What does the labour market think of university education? Recruitment, competences and emerging training trends](#)
- > [European Approach for international joint programmes: Experience in Catalonia and future challenges](#)
- > [Student training on quality assurance in higher education at the University of Girona](#)
- > [Presentation of the report “Equity in graduate employment outcomes and social mobility for Catalan on-campus universities”](#)
- > QADOC project: Capacity building for the evaluation and quality assurance of PhD programmes and research in Senegal, the Republic of Guinea and the Republic of the Congo

2024

- > [Student training on quality assurance in higher education](#)
- > [Research assessment: indicators and challenges for local research and research in Catalan](#)
- > [Monitoring and renewal of institutional accreditation: first experiences](#)
- > [Qualitative research assessment: challenges and experiences](#)

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- > Presentation of the subject benchmark statement for Biosciences
- > Presentation of the subject benchmark statement for Language and Literature Studies
- > [Student training on quality assurance in higher education](#)

2023

- > [Employment outcomes of graduates from Catalan universities](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Production Engineering](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Construction](#)

2022

- > [Employability and university education in the field of Biosciences](#)
- > [Reflections on emerging international trends in the assessment of teaching staff: where do we want to go?](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Psychology](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Economics and Business](#)
- > [Employability and university education in Pharmacy: Satisfaction, employment outcomes and opinion of pharmacies](#)
- > [Employability and university education in the field of Communication](#)
- > [The new validation process](#)
- > [SMART-QUAL Policy Learning Forum](#)
- > [Challenges in the university education of teachers for compulsory secondary education, upper secondary education, vocational education and training, and language education](#)
- > Presentation of the report “Satisfaction of arts higher education (AHE) graduates”

17. ANNEX 4. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF THE APPLICATION OF THE IQAS

The table below summarises the evidence demonstrating the application of AQU Catalunya's IQAS:

Table 28. Summary of evidence of the application of AQU Catalunya's IQAs

	Evidence:
PLAN	Policies Strategic plan Annual activity programme Project planning
DO	Implementation of: · Internal procedures and instructions defining activities, responsibilities and outputs · Review guides · Regulations · Reports and records
CHECK	Monitoring of the Agency's activities through coordination meetings, strategic meetings and project monitoring meetings Quality Management and Information Security Committee Indicator monitoring and analysis Meta-evaluation Follow-up of incidents and internal and external improvement proposals (intranet portal, website mailbox and corporate email) Internal audits External audits
ACT	Improvement plan Periodic review of review guides and procedures

Source: AQU Catalunya

Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency
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