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PROFILES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TAKING PART IN ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR DEGREE PROGRAMMES, INSTITUTIONS, TEACHING STAFF AND APPEALS

One of the basic principles on which the European Standards and Guidelines are based is transparency in the appointment of external experts in quality assurance processes.

In order to guarantee the value and coherence of the work conducted by our experts, AQU Catalunya ensures that they are selected according to strict criteria, and specifically that:

- they possess the appropriate skills and are capable of performing their duties effectively,
- they receive the necessary training and instructions and
- are independent and have no conflicts of interest.

Regardless of the body with which they required to collaborate, **all of AQU Catalunya's external experts** must be able to comply with the following requirements:

- Be available to participate in the activities of the relevant commission responsibly.
- Possess sufficient knowledge of and accept the applicable framework for the relevant project.
- Be willing to adhere to AQU Catalunya's principles of action, values, and code of ethics; the Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area's standards and guidelines for quality assurance; and AQU Catalunya's information security and quality policy.

Experts may be selected to serve on assessment commissions, assessment committees, or to collaborate as advisers to the assessment commissions.

The assessment commissions are permanent bodies made up of members who serve four-year terms that can be renewed only once.

The assessment committees are bodies that are created specifically to deal with individual assessment projects. The composition of these bodies in terms of the number of members and the diversity of profiles will vary depending on the project. The external assessment committees may therefore consist of academic staff, professionals, methodology specialists and students who, as a whole, can guarantee the necessary academic and/or professional knowledge of the discipline to be assessed, thereby ensuring consistency in the assessments. Universities have the opportunity to inform AQU Catalunya if any member of an external assessment committee presents a conflict of interest that would prevent them from carrying out the assessment.

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General criteria for the composition of the assessment commissions and committees

With regard to the composition of AQU Catalunya's commissions, the Agency endeavours to:

- Ensure that the membership is representative of all the regions within the Catalan Higher Education System. The participation of experts from both public and private universities should also be taken into account.
- Encourage the presence of experts from other university systems, both national and international. Foster the involvement of international experts in the assessment of qualifications and institutions.
- Achieve gender parity.
- Avoid conflicts of interest by establishing mechanisms such as:
    - In the case of assessment commissions and specific assessment commissions, members must abstain from debate and collective decision-making if there is a potential conflict of interest.
    - In the case of assessment commissions and specific assessment commissions, members may not form part of the external assessment committees, except in the case of pilot projects, where members may belong to the committee to consolidate and test the methodology, but must abstain from the decision-making process.
    - In the case of external assessment committees for degree programmes and institutions, none of the members may be linked to the higher education institution involved.
- Ensure that all experts undergo the necessary training to equip them with the skills required to execute their responsibilities effectively.

Specific criteria for the composition of the assessment commissions and committees

A. Criteria for participating in teaching staff assessment processes

We distinguish between two different categories:

- Members of the Research Assessment Commission and its specific commissions.
- External advisers to the specific commissions of the Research Assessment Commission.

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Members of the Research Assessment Commission and its specific commissions

In accordance with current regulations,[1] members of the Research Assessment Commission (CAR) and its specific commissions must have one of the following profiles:

1. Be an official or contracted full professor (CU, CC).
2. Be an official full professor or an associate professor with a permanent contract (TU, AGR).
3. Be working as a researcher in Catalonia, in a category comparable to the above.[2]
4. Be academics of acknowledged international standing (or a similar teaching and research staff member [PDI]).

They must also meet one of the following conditions:

- Have received three positive assessments of their research activity.
- Have been awarded the National Research Prize, the Narcís Monturiol Medal for Scientific and Technological Merit, the Generalitat Award for the Promotion of University Research or another distinction of an equivalent or higher level, at the discretion of the Governing Board.
- Have been deemed to have "research suitability" by the CAR, in accordance with the procedure and criteria approved by the CAR and considered equivalent to three positive assessments of their research activity.[3]

1. Article 12.4 of Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

2. In the case of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the categories are as follows: research professor for a public research body (OPI), research scientist, and tenured scientist.

[3] The CAR member whose scientific profile most closely matches that of the candidate conducts a preliminary assessment of the candidate's research merits to verify whether they meet the established threshold of excellence. If the assessment is favourable, the chair decides whether to appoint the candidate to the CAR or to a specific commission and informs the CAR Plenary accordingly.

External advisers to the Research Assessment Commission

With regard to external advisers to the specific commissions of the Research Assessment Commission, the requirements are as follows:

Assessment	Adviser profile	Research period[4]
Evaluation of the performance of tenure-eligible lecturers	CU, CC, TU, AGR, research professor (CSIC), research scientist (CSIC), tenured scientist (CSIC), similar PDI	Two or more
Research accreditations	CU, CC, TU, AGR, research professor (CSIC), research scientist (CSIC), tenured scientist (CSIC), similar PDI	Three or more
Advanced research accreditations	CU, CC, research professor (CSIC), similar PDI	Three or more
Six-year research quality premiums	CU, CC, TU, AGR, research professor (CSIC), research scientist (CSIC), tenured scientist (CSIC), similar PDI	Three or more

In exceptional circumstances where there is a shortage of experts in specific fields, the required number of six-year periods may be reduced.

B. Criteria for participating in institutional and degree programme assessment processes

We distinguish between three different categories:

- Members of the Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP) and its specific commissions.
- External advisers to the Institutional and Programme Review Commission.
- Members of the external assessment committees, who are divided into different profiles:

Academic profile

- They must be teachers or researchers from the relevant field of knowledge.
- They must have academic experience within an institution and have undertaken either teaching or management responsibilities.
- They must have a permanent position; they cannot be temporary contract staff.

4. Research periods or equivalent recognition, where applicable.

- The committee chairs must be full professors or persons accredited as full professors, unless they are IQAS certified. If necessary, they may be tenured with two six-year research quality premiums. They must have recognised prestige as doctoral professors.

Professional profile

- They must have at least five years of professional experience; in the case of institutional assessments, additional years of experience are recommended.
- They must be connected to the field of the specific programme or institution.
- For degree and institutional accreditation assessments, they should preferably be from Catalonia.
- They may work at the university as associate teaching and research staff, provided they have the professional experience required in the first point.
- Technical, management, administrative and service staff (PTGAS) are eligible.

Student profile

- Current bachelor's, master's or doctoral students, or recent graduates (maximum one year) in the relevant field of knowledge.
- In the case of bachelor's students:
  - Students currently enrolled in the final year of their degree in the relevant field of knowledge or with knowledge of the subject area being assessed.
  - They may not assess a degree programme at a higher level than their own (this does not apply to institutional assessments).
  - Students that have completed AQU Catalunya's student course or have equivalent training or experience may also be in their second year.

Secretarial profile with methodological expertise

- Specialists from AQU Catalonia.
- Personnel from university quality assurance departments.
- Academic staff specialising in assessment methodology or who have participated in assessments carried out by other quality agencies.
- Personnel from other quality agencies: communication must be established between AQU Catalunya and the relevant agency.
- Other profiles: they must have proven knowledge and experience of quality assurance in higher education.

C. Criteria for participating in the assessment processes of the Appeals Commission

Members of the Appeals Commission and any external advisers must not have been involved in the initial assessment of the case under review and their involvement must not present a conflict of interest. Previous experience in assessment processes is considered an advantage.

We distinguish between two different categories:

- Members of the Appeals Commission.
- External advisers to the Appeals Commission.

Members of the Appeals Commission

As per the current regulations,[5] members of the Appeals Commission must have recognised academic, scientific, or professional standing, as well as the necessary technical competence, and they must not be members of any other Agency commission.

They must comply with the same requirements as the members of the Research Assessment Commission and its specific commissions.

External advisers to the Appeals Commission

External advisers will have the following profiles:

- For the assessment of teaching staff appeals: the same profile as the advisers to the teaching assessment commissions.
- For the assessment of degree programme appeals: the same profile as the advisers to the assessment commissions or committees.
- Previous experience of programme or institutional assessment processes is considered an advantage.

Criteria for the composition of assessment committees participating in international assessments

Committees participating in international assessments shall be formed within the context of the specific assignment.

The committee members must comply with the profile defined by AQU Catalunya and avoid conflicts of interest. Therefore, they cannot be affiliated with the institution being evaluated.

5. Article 16 of Law 15/2015, of 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency.

In addition, the two academic members must have proven experience in international assessments.

The recommended composition of the committee is as follows:

- The chairperson.
- One academic representative.
- One professional representative, who may be from the relevant country.
- One student representative, who may be from the relevant country.
- A secretary with expertise in methodology.
- A technical expert from the relevant national agency, if applicable, as an observer.