

# ACTION PLAN 2022

July 2021



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# INTRODUCTION

The draft Action Plan 2022, as usual, is based on the previous plan, the Strategic Plan 2019-2022, the Action Plan 2019-2022, which responds to the requirements of the ENQA external assessment, and the improvements that emerge from AQU Catalunya's meta-assessment processes.

New to this Plan is the fact that, in addition to being structured in strategic areas, the actions are grouped in the five corporate social responsibility commitments to which AQU Catalunya aims to respond:

1. Commitment to improving higher education
2. Commitment to society
3. Commitment to good governance
4. Commitment to alliances
5. Commitment to the workplace

The main activities that are expected to be carried out based on social responsibility commitments are as follows:

## 1. COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

This commitment is addressed from three strategic action areas: Action area 1: Institutional Quality; Teaching Staff Quality; and action area 3: Knowledge generation and transfer.

***Institutional Quality:*** This includes the activities of assessing institutions and qualifications in the Catalan university system. For 2022, the plan is to assess 26 centres, 23 for certification of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) and 3 for assessment of cross-cutting elements of IQAS, and the institutional accreditation of all applications that meet the requirements. The AQU Catalunya award will be held in this regard to recognise best practices. The methodologies that accompany the institutional reaccreditation processes will be implemented and training days will be held to disseminate and train the people who are to participate in these assessment processes. And with regard to university degree assessments, the plan is to verify 65 new degrees, modify 200 degrees, monitor 50 degrees and carry out 100 external visits to accredit a further 193 degrees. Improvements will also be made to the assessment procedure, including shortening assessment deadlines and introducing a computer application to manage the assessment process.

***Teaching Staff Quality:*** this includes the activities of assessing university teaching staff. In teaching staff assessment prior to university selection processes, it is planned to assess 1,750 applications among all the calls and to continue supporting the Serra Húnter Programme. In the case of assessment of research merits, the plan is to recognise 400 applications, assesses 800 applications from non-civil servant teaching staff and assess 400 applications from the knowledge transfer and innovation brackets. The most significant

improvement will be the design of the system to move the pre-recruitment assessment processes to annual open calls.

**Knowledge Generation and Transfer:** this area includes activities that create knowledge for the assessment processes and for decision-making. With regard to surveys, in 2022 the exploitation of the 7th edition of the survey on university graduate access to the labour market will continue and the fieldwork for the 2023 survey will begin. Work will be done to carry out the satisfaction survey of recent undergraduate and master's degree students. AQU Catalunya will participate in the dissemination and discussion of the results of the third edition of the Via Universitaria survey. In terms of studies, a cross-cutting report will be drafted, studies and analyses will be carried out from a gender perspective, and the use of machine learning in assessment processes will be explored.

## 2. COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

This commitment is addressed from two strategic action areas: Action Area 5. Strategic Management.

**Knowledge Generation and Transfer:** this includes the activities of disseminating the results of the assessment processes and studies. Specifically, the updating the EUC portal and organising 7 seminars and workshops. Also the publication of 8 reports and 1 review of assessment methodology.

**Strategic Management:** this includes communication and dissemination activities through corporate communication tools (website and quarterly newsletter) and social media (YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn). Work will continue throughout the year to ensure accessibility to the web applications managed by AQU Catalunya.

## 3. COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

This commitment is addressed from two strategic action areas: Action Area 5. Strategic Management and Action Area 6. Internal organisation.

**Strategic Management:** this includes activities related to the functioning and coordination of AQU Catalunya's activities with the management of the governing, assessment and advisory bodies. During 2022, the Strategic Plan 2013-2026 will be drafted, the process of external evaluation of AQU Catalunya's compliance with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area will be finalised and the programme contract with the Generalitat de Catalunya will be carried forward.

**Internal Organisation:** this area includes activities related to the internal functioning of AQU Catalunya: accountability, economic management, information technology and general services management. In 2022, AQU Catalunya will continue to promote digital administration and will participate in the management procedure for administrative

procurement processes as appropriate, as well as in the pilot plan to implement the Electronic Procurement File Manager in public sector entities

#### 4. COMMITMENT TO ALLIANCES

This commitment is addressed from two strategic action areas: Action Area 5. Strategic Management and Action Area 4. Internationalisation.

**Strategic Management:** this area includes activities related to institutional relations and social agents in Catalonia, State and international relations and support for the establishment of INQAAHE in Barcelona. In 2022, AQU Catalunya will ensure that alliances are maintained and consolidated

**Internationalisation:** this strategic area covers all international actions. Participation in initiated international projects will continue and monitoring will be carried out at foreign centres that teach degrees in Catalonia and those accredited internationally with AQU Catalunya if resources are available.

#### 5. COMMITMENT TO THE WORKPLACE

This commitment is addressed from strategic action area 5. Internal organisation.

**Internal Organisation:** this strategic area covers all human resources actions. Of greatest significance in 2022 will be the actions undertaken by AQU Catalunya to stabilise jobs and increase the number of staff in strategic areas. The entity will also complete the selection processes for the extraordinary calls for applications for AQU Catalunya's public job vacancies.

The following common quality objectives have been established for 2022:

1. Pass the international external assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.
2. Draw up the AQU Catalunya Strategic Plan 2023-2026.
3. Implement the internal management system for assessing degrees and institutions.
4. Reduce the time taken to issue reports in the field of degree and teaching staff assessment.

In addition to the activities set out in this document, the Agency may also carry out other activities that are expressly entrusted to it by its Governing Board, by the ministry responsible for universities or by other bodies, taking whatever decisions are necessary to ensure viability.

Martí Casadesús Fa

Director of AQU Catalunya

# 1. COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION

## ACTION AREA I. INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY

### A. Institutional assessment

With the aim of simplifying external assessments and providing university institutions with greater autonomy, AQU Catalunya is moving towards the implementation of institutional assessment processes, in line with the trends of quality agencies at the European level.

One of the main actions included in AQU Catalunya's Strategic Plan 2019-2022 is to "roll out and consolidate the institutional accreditation process for institutions by means of a methodology that is appropriate to the objectives", which, once it is in place, will make the assessment systems more efficient.

At present, the institutional assessment of training programmes involves two actions: certification of the implementation of internal quality assurance systems and institutional accreditation processes.

In addition, AQU Catalunya's institutional assessment activity also includes the assessment of departmental research and accreditation of the Teaching Assessment Manuals.

#### 1. Certification of the implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS)

Since 2007 AQU Catalunya has been assisting universities in the design of their IQAS through the AUDIT programme. The IQAS that have been in place for a number of years are eligible for certification in accordance with the current methodology.

The aim of assessing the IQAS for certification is to check that the system is in place and is suitable for ensuring the quality assurance of the university degrees being offered.

Certification offers the following benefits:

- Centres that have certified the implementation of their IQAS and have accredited at least 50% of the bachelor's degrees and 50% of the master's degrees they offer are eligible for institutional accreditation.
- If the centre has certified the implementation of its IQAS but has not yet accredited the percentage of degrees required to obtain institutional accreditation, the remaining degrees it submits for verification, modification and accreditation will be exempt from requiring additional documentation relating to quality assurance systems.

Centres that are certified obtain the following certificate and label:

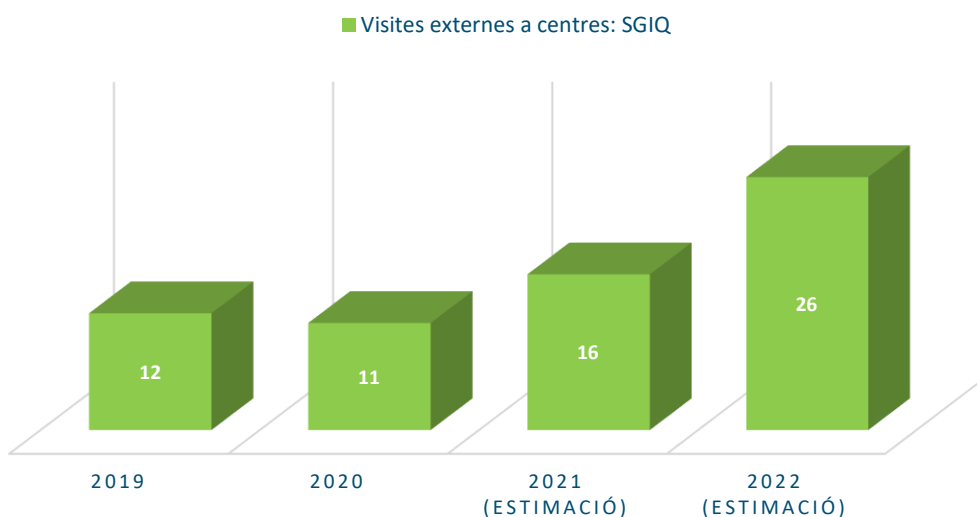


26 assessments are planned for 2022: 23 assessments of centres for IQAS certification (including 2 departments) and 3 assessments for certification of cross-cutting elements. Also, the appropriate measures will be identified to ensure that in the medium term the majority of Catalan universities are IQAS certified.

Also during 2022, actions will be promoted to encourage this type of accreditation as opposed to programme accreditation. Work will also be carried out to create the AQU Catalunya awards for best practices within the framework of this assessment programme.

The evolution of external visits to centres is as follows:

Graph 1. Evolution of visits to centres for IQAS certification



The results of the institutionally certified centres can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the reports on the EUCInformes website and also on the DEQAR repository, provided by the European register.

## 2. Institutional accreditation

Centres that have obtained IQAS certification can apply for institutional accreditation, which will allow them to automatically accredit all the official university degrees taught at that centre for a renewable period of five years.

As it is a virtually automatic process, after a request from the university a linked report will be issued for the Council of Universities. AQU Catalunya will respond to all the applications it receives in 2022.

Centres that have obtained institutional accreditation will be awarded an accreditation label for each of the degrees offered by the centre as well as the following label of distinction:



The reports can be consulted on the EUCInformes website and also on the DEQAR repository, provided by the European register.

The drafting of the documents that complement the institutional accreditation process will be completed during 2022, including the Guide for obtaining institutional accreditation, as well as the additional dimensions of this programme (internationalisation, research/teaching interaction, employability, social, gender and degree excellence).

During the year, dissemination and training of the methodology will be carried out to prepare the centres to start the process of institutional reaccreditation (the accreditation of the first institutionally accredited centre is up for renewal in 2023).

## 3. Assessment of departmental research

The purpose of this assessment is to contribute to strengthening the university as a research organisation of high international standing. Departmental research is assessed using the current methodology in force.

Passing this assessment entitles the holder to use the corresponding quality label, which may be “favorable” (positive) or “excel·lent” (excellent).





Universities requesting the assessment of a department must assume the cost of the assessment through a specific agreement.

#### 4. Assessment of teaching merits: Teaching assessment manuals

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

Through this programme, universities apply their teaching assessment manuals, which are tools that specify the assessment policy and mechanisms used. These manuals must be previously accredited by AQU Catalunya. The assessment methodology and results can be consulted on the AQU Catalunya website.

During 2022, the Accreditation Guide for Teaching Assessment Manuals will be reviewed, and work will be done to integrate the affiliated centres in the implementation of assessment manuals for their teaching staff. Also, the accreditation of a manual from a private university will be processed.

## B. Assessment of university degrees

AQU Catalunya approved in 2010 and updated in 2016 the Framework for verification, monitoring, modification and accreditation (VSMA Framework), with the aim of implementing a cyclical and standardised external assessment system for official university degrees in Catalan universities.

The VSMA Framework establishes the relationship between the processes of verification (assessment prior to implementation), monitoring the performance of the degree, modification to incorporate the improvements detected during the monitoring phase, and accreditation, which by means of an external visit by a committee of experts verifies that the degree programme is being implemented as planned. These processes are assessed by AQU Catalunya's Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee, its specific committees and the external assessment committees it creates on an ad hoc basis.

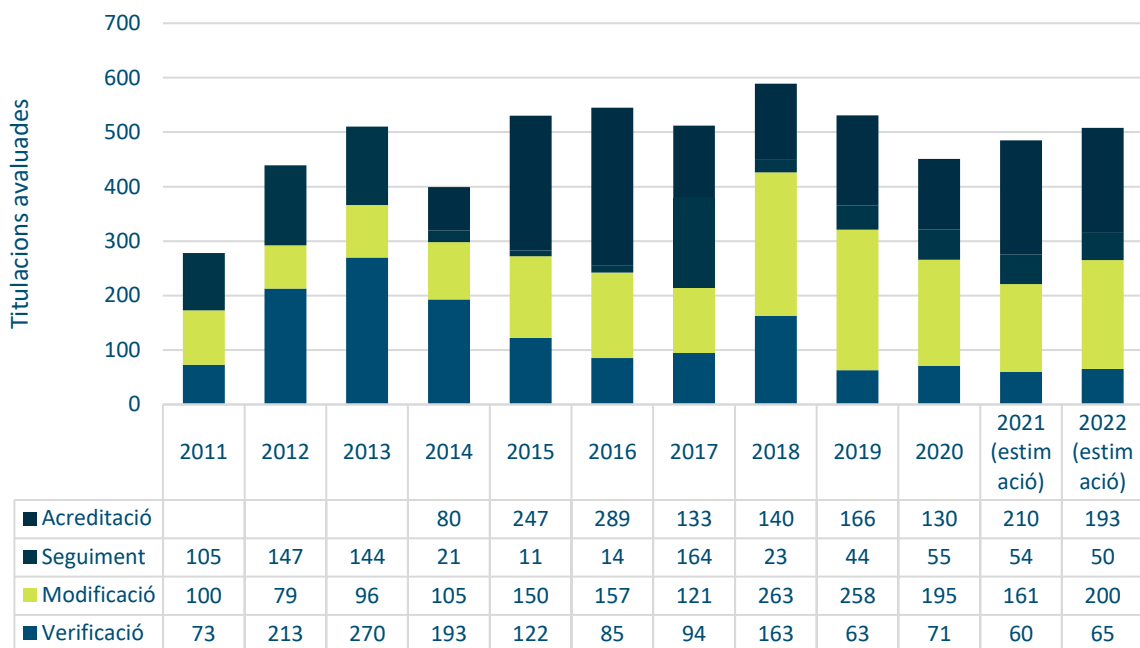
The degrees subject to assessment under the VSMA Framework are the official bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Catalan universities offered by Catalan universities, as well as higher education arts programmes offered by centres of higher education in the arts under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

The external assessment processes of verification, monitoring, modification and accreditation aim to demonstrate the quality of the degrees and increase the transparency of the training programmes offered by Catalan universities, thus contributing to generating mutual trust and better recognition of the degrees at the level of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

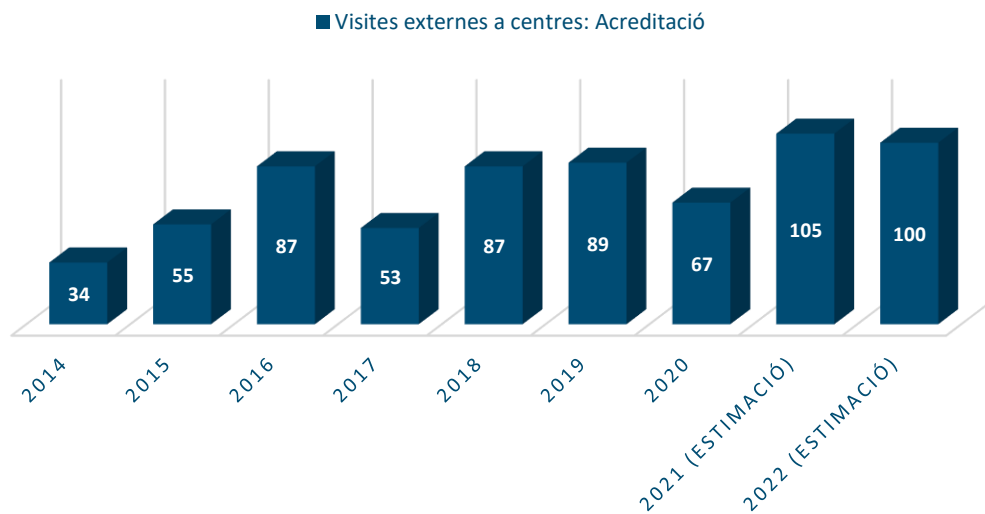
The external assessments carried out by AQU Catalunya can be recognised by other European and international institutions, given that the Agency is registered with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and are useful for guiding prospective university students and their families in the process of choosing their degree through the EUCEstudis portal.

The evolution of the actions taken under the VSMA Framework is as follows:

Graph 2. Evolution of degrees assessed within the VSMA Framework



Graph 3. The evolution of external visits to centres to assess degree programmes



## 5. Verification and modification

### *Verification*

AQU Catalunya aims to ensure the quality of the design of proposed bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes prior to their implementation by means of ex-ante assessment. This assessment is made in accordance with the methodology in force.

Verification proposals are authorised in advance by the Catalan Government and must be submitted to the Agency no later than 15 April. In 2022, AQU Catalunya plans to evaluate 65 new programmes to be implemented between 2023 to 2024.

Official university degrees and higher education arts programmes equivalent to bachelor's degrees that have been awarded a favourable report by AQU Catalunya are awarded the corresponding label that distinguishes them from those that have not passed this process. These degrees can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the corresponding reports on the EUCInformes website and also on the DEQAR repository, provided by the European register.

### *Modification*

As a result of the monitoring process, universities can propose substantial changes to university degrees until 31 March through the modification process, which is assessed according to the current methodology.

Taking into account previous years, the plan is to assess 200 requests for modifications in 2022.

The results can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the corresponding reports on the EUCInformes website and also on the DEQAR repository, provided by the European register.

## 6. Benchmarking

The VSMA Framework (2016) promotes the concept of mutual trust between institutions and offers a second way of verifying degree programmes based on benchmarks by discipline that helps in the design of new programmes. In this regard, the benchmarks should provide coherence and identity, and should define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the competences and skills needed to develop knowledge or competence in the discipline.

Centres who have a certified Internal Quality Assurance System and at least 50% of their degrees accredited can carry out verification in this way, which is practically automatic.

If AQU Catalunya has the available resources during 2022, it will implement a benchmarking process.

- Available benchmarks: Computer Science, Tourism, Economics and Business Administration.

## 7. Monitoring

Monitoring the performance of official university degrees is the cornerstone of the VSMA Framework. In this phase the university can, based on the analysis of the evidence, correct any observed deviations or propose improvements for excellence and prepare for the next accreditation process. This assessment is made in accordance with the methodology in force.

Universities must complete a monitoring report on their degrees at least every two years. Submission to AQU is not compulsory, except for those centres that offer degrees that passed the accreditation process with certain conditions and with certain warnings from the Specific assessment committees during the verification process. In these cases, the centre must submit the monitoring report by the end of December two years after having received the relevant report.

In 2022 AQU Catalunya will assess the degree monitoring reports through accreditation assessment reports which will provide an overall qualification with certain conditions or through verification reports that will contain mandatory requirements. In total, it is estimated that AQU Catalunya will carry out the monitoring of 33 master's degrees, 13 bachelor's degrees and 4 doctoral degrees.

The results of the monitoring review can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the corresponding reports on the EUCInformes website.

## 8. Accreditation

Accreditation is the verification based on an external visit that the degree programme is being carried out as planned. All official university degrees must undergo the accreditation process within six years of their initial verification (or last accreditation) in the case of higher education arts programmes, bachelor's degrees and doctorates, and within four years in the case of master's degrees.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya plans to:

- Assess accreditation of 256 degrees: 123 bachelor's degrees, 70 master's degrees, 60 doctoral programmes, as well as 3 master's level higher education arts programmes. This, in theory, means a total of 121 external visits (119 external visits at the level of the Catalan University System and 2 external visits at the level of higher education in the arts).
- However, the impact of the institutional accreditation process linked to the certification of the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems will reduce the assessment pressures on the Catalan University System, to the extent that only 100 external visits will need to be arranged, corresponding to: 77 bachelor's degrees, 53 master's degrees, 3 master's degrees in the arts and 60 doctorates.
- AQU Catalunya will use the current assessment methodology to carry out the visits and the accreditation process.
- It will issue the corresponding accreditation reports, in accordance with the applications received.
- The European Approach will be used to recognise joint programmes in the assessment process.
- Include information on the transfer of credits in accreditation reports to facilitate the possible internationalisation of degree programmes.

Degree programmes accredited by AQU Catalunya will be awarded the corresponding certificate and quality label as a distinctive element that informs society that they have passed this process, with a grade of either favourable or excellent:

University bachelor's and master's degrees



Bachelor's and master's degree in higher education arts programmes



The results can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the corresponding reports on the EUCInformes website and also on the DEQAR repository, provided by the European register.

## 9. Accreditation of Additional dimensions

With the aim of highlighting the added value of Catalan university degree programmes, AQU Catalunya offers the possibility of assessing three additional dimensions once a programme has passed the accreditation process, in accordance with the current assessment methodology:

- Professional development and integration
- Interaction between research and teaching
- Internationalisation

Passing this assessment entitles the holder to use the corresponding quality label, which may be “favorable” (positive) or “excel·lent” (excellent).



The results can be consulted on the EUCEstudis website and the corresponding reports on the EUCInformes website.

Interested degree programmes should apply to AQU Catalunya, though the implementation of this programme is subject to the availability of resources.

## 10. Ex ante accreditation of short learning programmes

In 2020, AQU Catalunya, in collaboration with the Secretariat for Universities and Research, the Catalan Public Employment Service (SOC) and the Consortium for Lifelong Learning in Catalonia, the Pilot Guide for the ex-ante accreditation of short-term programmes linked to the Catalan Public Employment Service's Catalogue of Training in Specialised Fields.

Short learning programmes (SLPs) promote continuing professional development and lifelong learning. Consequently, the programme contributes to the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

During 2022, provided that sufficient resources are available, the accreditation process may be launched for the design of new short programmes, taking into account the needs of the labour market in Catalonia, and provided that they correspond to bachelor's and master's degree level and that they are designed adopting a professional perspective and that they may be registered in the Catalogue of Training in Specialised Fields (SEPE).

Passing this assessment entitles the holder to use the corresponding quality label:



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

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

AQU Catalunya has identified the internationalisation of university programmes offered in Catalonia as one of the areas for promoting excellence in higher education. And the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 aims, among other strategic lines, to strengthen AQU Catalunya's international position and that of the Catalan university system. The mechanisms it will use in 2022 to do so, in addition to the additional dimension of internationalisation, are as follows:

- **Certifications of degrees by subject matter (labels)**

In accordance with AQU Catalunya's Framework for the positioning of AQU Catalunya with regard to quality labels by subject matter, AQU Catalunya supports universities that request them in integrating the assessment process for degree accreditation with the assessment for the award of recognised international certifications by subject matter. The cost of degree certifications by subject matter is borne by the university, in accordance with the agreement that will be signed. AQU will respond to any requests in this regard.

- **AQU Certifications - World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)**

As of 2023, the United States of America will only accept graduates who have studied at medical schools accredited by agencies that follow WFME standards. In

order to increase prestige and recognition, AQU Catalunya will implement the certification process for these courses in accordance with WFME standards.

## E. Procedural improvements

### 12. Procedural improvements

The following procedural improvement are planned for 2022:

- Reduction of the time taken to issue final reports to achieve the following objectives:
  - Verification: maximum 4 months
  - Monitoring: maximum 3 months
  - Programme accreditation: maximum 6 months
- Implementation of an application that allows for greater efficiency in the management of the assessment process and better integration of information from the assessment processes of degrees and institutions (Talassa).
- Improved risk analysis as a supporting element for setting assessment priorities.
- Increased number of international experts involved in assessment processes.

## D. Appeals and review reports

### 13. Resolution of appeals and review reports

The decisions of the Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee and its specific committees regarding assessments may be subject to appeal or review reports.

University institutions may submit an appeal or a review report to the AQU Catalunya Appeals Committee, following the appropriate procedure, and the Committee will decide on the matter in accordance with the established terms.



## ACTION AREA II. TEACHING STAFF QUALITY

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

In order to be admitted to the selection processes aimed at recruiting teaching staff in Catalan public universities, interested parties must have a positive preliminary report, in the case of tenure-eligible lecturers, and accreditation of research or advanced research, for associate professors and full professors, respectively.

The Catalan private universities and AQU Catalunya have signed an agreement with the aim of ensuring that the assessment of teaching staff at these institutions is included in the same terms in the processes for issuing of preliminary reports on tenure-eligible lecturers, accreditation of research and advanced research.

There are two annual deadlines for the submission of applications for the positions of tenure-eligible lecturer, associate professor and professor, the assessment of which is carried out by the Research Assessment Committee and its specific committees. In the last six years, the number of applications for assessment in these categories has almost doubled, largely due to AQU Catalunya's collaboration with the Generalitat de Catalunya in the Sierra Húnter Plan (SHP) for the recruitment of university teaching staff.

Graph 4. Evolution of applications for assessment prior to university selection processes



#### 14. Procedural improvements

In addition to continuing the review and meta-assessment processes to ensure the assessment procedure and criteria are up to date, the following actions are planned for 2022:

- Design and analysis of a system to carry out open calls all year round for the assessment of teaching staff prior to selection processes.
- Design the implementation to simplify and standardise CV formats submitted by applicants.

Moreover, AQU Catalunya will continue to work towards the recognition of AQU's assessments by other state agencies.

#### 15. Reports for tenure-eligible lecturers

The post of tenure-eligible lecturer is the entry-level position for contractual university teaching posts and offers the possibility of promotion to higher posts with a permanent contract. AQU Catalunya assesses the applications and issues favourable preliminary reports for submission to the selection processes for this category teaching staff.

In order to be admitted to the selection processes, candidates must hold a doctoral degree.

Two calls for applications will be opened and adjudicated during the year, and support for the Sierra Húnter Plan will continue. In addition, the procedure for expressly issuing reports for tenure-eligible lecturers will remain open for exceptional cases.

In 2022 the plan is to assess 1,100 applications for issuing preliminary reports for tenure-eligible lecturers.

The results can be consulted on the AQU Catalunya website.

#### 16. Accreditation of research and advanced research

Entry to the university as a full-time temporary lecturer can be in the following categories: a) full professor, which implies an established teaching and research career, and b) associate professor, which implies proven teaching and research ability.

In order to be admitted to the selection processes, candidates must hold a doctoral degree, have at least three years' postdoctoral experience and have a research accreditation, for access to the category of associate professor, or an advanced research accreditation, for access to the category of full professor.

Two calls for applications will be opened and adjudicated during the year, and support for the Sierra Húnter Plan will continue.

In 2022 the plan is to assess 750 applications for issuing research and advanced research accreditations.

The results can be consulted on the AQU Catalunya website: associate and full professor.

### **17. Reports for Serra Húnter Programme temporary teaching staff**

The call for obtaining reports for Sierra Húnter Plan temporary teaching staff will remain open throughout the year. The aim is to help those responsible for the Programme to make decisions in relation to the stabilisation of teaching staff contracted through this Plan.

In 2022, the plan is to issue 20 reports for Serra Húnter Programme temporary teaching staff.

### **18. Certificates of teaching**

The certificate of teaching is aimed at teaching staff who hold research and/or advanced research accreditation issued by AQU Catalunya and at civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities. The certificate of teaching recognises that the teaching carried out by the applicant meets pre-established teaching requirements and may be considered by universities in their calls for applications to the teaching staff.

Applications for the certification of teaching will be assessed annually, in accordance with the established procedure, and are aimed at teaching staff who hold research and/or advanced research accreditation issued by AQU Catalunya and also at civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities.

In 2022, the plan is to start the digitisation of this procedure and to respond to the submitted applications.

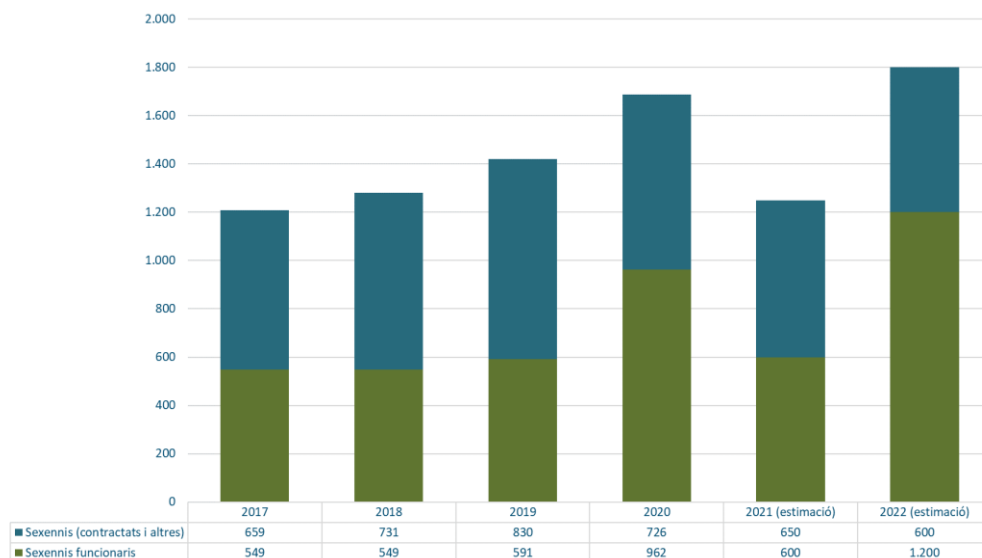
## **B. Assessment of merits**

The allocation of salary supplements to civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities is linked to the assessment of individual merits in teaching, research and management.

In the case of teaching and management merits, AQU Catalunya certifies that the assessment is carried out in accordance with the Teaching Assessment Manual or the corresponding decree.

With regard to research merits, AQU Catalunya assesses them directly, through the Research Assessment Committee and its specific committees. More than 1,000 applications are submitted each year.

Graph 5. Evolution of applications submitted for the assessment of teaching staff



## 19. Research Merits

AQU Catalunya directly assesses the individual research merits of its non-civil servant teaching and research staff on the basis of the established procedure and criteria, and has signed an agreement with the National Research Activity Assessment Committee (CNEAI) whereby it recognises the assessments carried out by this committee, whether positive or negative, on the research activity of civil servant university teaching staff who have applied for it.

Since 2011, civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff who apply for the assessment of research merits may also apply for the assessment of the research and technology transfer bracket, although this is a minority format.

In 2022, the calls for the assessment of the research merits (six-year periods) of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching staff in Catalan public universities, permanent and temporary, will be adjudicated. The assessment of the research merits of the teaching staff of private universities will also be carried out, using the same procedures as those of public universities and in accordance with the agreements signed. Specifically, one call will be opened for non-civil servant teaching and research staff and a second for civil servant teaching and research staff, teaching staff from private universities and others.

In addition to these calls for applications, the research activity of the affiliated centres with which AQU Catalunya has signed respective agreements will also be assessed. In these cases, the criteria and procedures will be the same as those used to assess the research activity of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities.

In 2022, the differentiated procedure between the assessment of research merits and the recognition of assessment issued by the Research Activity Assessment Committee will be reinforced.

In 2022 the plan is to assess 800 applications and recognise 400 applications for obtaining research merits.

The results can be consulted on the AQU Catalunya website.

## 20. Research merits: knowledge transfer and innovation bracket

During 2022 AQU Catalunya will assess the research merits in relation to the knowledge transfer and innovation bracket of the civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff in Catalan public universities, in accordance with the approved procedure and criteria for assessment.

In 2022 AQU Catalunya plans to assess 200 applications and recognise 400 applications.

## 21. Teaching and management merits.

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

AQU Catalunya will certify the teaching and management merits issued by Catalan public universities in accordance with the established criteria.

Individual teaching merits are achieved in accordance with the criteria of the corresponding teaching assessment manuals accredited in the universities.

During 2022, the plan is to certify 1,250 teaching brackets and 275 management brackets.

## C. Ruling on appeals

### 22. Ruling on appeals

The decisions of the Research Assessment Committee and its specific committees may be subject to appeal.

Individuals who have taken part in AQU Catalunya's teaching staff assessment processes may submit an appeal to the AQU Catalunya Appeals Committee, following the appropriate procedure, and the Committee will decide on the matter in accordance with the established terms.

## ACTION AREA III. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER.

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

#### 23. Graduate employment outcomes

AQU Catalunya has been coordinating this three-year study for 20 years, a project of Catalan public universities, promoted by their social councils, and of private universities, which was born out of the interest in obtaining comparable data and benchmarks on the quality of their graduates' employment outcomes. Higher arts education centres have also been involved since the 2017 edition.

In 2022, the data from the 2020 study will continue to be exploited and appropriate presentations will be made at the Catalan, national and international levels. In addition, the 2023 survey on access to the labour market will be launched, comprising the following tasks:

- Agreements will be signed with all participating centres.
- The data for the centres and graduating classes participating in the study will be collated.
- The necessary resources for carrying out the fieldwork over the phone will be contracted.
- The process for carrying out the fieldwork online will be prepared.
- The fieldwork will begin.

AQU Catalunya will continue to promote, in collaboration with the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT), a population-based study on access to the labour market based on the registration data of the sample of university graduates included in the available censuses. This study is not intended to replace the three-year survey, but to complement it in the years when it is not conducted. This study, which consists of monitoring the graduating classes using administrative data, will become an official study and will be carried out annually. In 2022, work will continue to provide new registration data.

#### 24. Access to the labour market from the perspective of employers

AQU Catalunya will continue to conduct the third edition of the employer survey (2021-2023), which aims to obtain information on the perception of companies and organisations with regard to the skills and university training of graduates. The aim is to enable universities to develop policies to improve the university system in terms of the academic offer and training programmes, and thus bring university education and the labour market closer together.

In this new edition of the survey, the database of companies and organisations to be surveyed will be updated and expanded, questions will be asked about the suitability of the training of interns in order to increase our knowledge of the suitability of the skills acquired at universities. We will also collaborate with IDESCAT to use a module of the business climate survey to ask more general questions and, finally, we will compile the best practices that are carried out at universities with the aim of improving the acquisition of skills of university students.

Results from both IDESCAT and the employer survey will be available in 2022 and preparations to disseminate this information on certain sectors will begin. In addition, fieldwork will be carried out in 2 areas: Education and Health

## **25. The Catalan Talent Observatory**

Thanks to the collaboration of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, AQU Catalunya has created the Catalan Talent Observatory, which consists of a web application that provides information on the skills demanded by the labour market through the real-time analysis of job offers published on the Internet. This information is of interest to users, career guidance counsellors, those responsible for degree programmes, Public Administration officials and society in general.

In 2022, this web portal will be kept up to date if sufficient resources are available.

## **26. Bachelor's and master's degree graduate satisfaction survey**

The aim of this project is to develop benchmarks for the Catalan university system on the satisfaction of the bachelor's and master's degree graduates with the teaching/learning process, with services and facilities, and with the results achieved during their time at university. The survey aims to provide those in charge of degree programmes and the Catalan university system as a whole with common indicators to help improve teaching.

During 2022, the results of the 2021 survey will be integrated into the previous editions, the new indicators will be calculated and made public.

Also, in 2022, the fieldwork for the 2022 survey will begin.

The results of the graduates satisfaction survey can be consulted on the EUCDades website.

## **27. Via universitària**

Based on the agreement that establishes the collaboration framework between the Catalan University System Quality Assurance Agency and the Joan Lluís Vives Institute to promote the implementation of the third edition of the Via Universitària programme: access, learning conditions, expectations and returns from university studies. This agreement establishes that AQU Catalunya assumes the technical management of the programme, which consists

of 4 phases: Preparatory work, fieldwork, analysis, dissemination and discussion of results and further exploitation of the data and future opportunities of the programme. In 2022 AQU Catalunya will participate in the dissemination and discussion of the results.

## 28. Indicators of the Catalan university system

AQU Catalunya is aware of the importance of having indicators to help in decision-making, both for improving degree programme assessment processes and for analysing specific areas of the Catalan university system. For this reason, one of the strategic lines of the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 is titled "Facilitating access to quantitative and qualitative data, in an integrated way, to improve the quality of the Catalan university system". To this end, the Agency, in collaboration with the Secretariat for Universities and Research, provides universities with the necessary indicators for the processes of monitoring and accreditation of official university degrees.

In addition, the AQU Catalunya Degree Catalogue allows degrees to be classified into four group levels, which facilitates internal standardisation and external comparability. This structure has been applied in the reports produced by the Agency and is kept up to date. The classification of degrees in the catalogue is reviewed annually.

AQU Catalunya also manages and updates the catalogue of indicators that enables the management of the Agency's indicators. The catalogue indicators will be updated in 2022.

In 2022 they will be integrated into the data cubes, which feed the data displayed on the EUC and accreditation portal, which should allow better monitoring of the performance of degree programmes and university centres. Comparative degree indicator reports will also be uploaded.

## 29. Access to databases for research purposes

AQU Catalunya enables access to confidential databases of the different studies and projects to the teaching and research staff in Catalan universities for the purpose of preparing research projects and studies.

## B. Studies and Reports

### 30. Cross-cutting reports

As a result of the knowledge acquired in the assessment processes of official university degree programmes, AQU Catalunya prepares reports that offer an analysis of the degree programmes in Catalonia and propose areas for improvement.

In 2022, the cross-cutting report on Educational Psychology will be finalised and a report on Science degrees will be launched. This activity will be subject to the availability of resources.



The cross-cutting reports prepared can be consulted [here](#).

### **31. The positive assessment of teaching staff profiles**

During 2022, AQU Catalunya will keep the database up to date in order to extract and update the reports on the profiles of tenure-eligible lecturers, associate professors and full professors, based on collection of CVs of teaching staff who have passed the AQU Catalunya assessments.

The experience gained will also be used to produce profile reports in specific fields of knowledge where there may be difficulties in the assessment process in order to have a better understanding of the functioning of assessments in specific areas. This activity will be subject to the availability of resources.

### **32. Analysis from the gender perspective**

During 2022, if resources are available, teaching staff assessment processes will be analysed from a gender perspective, expanding on the study conducted on the assessment of six-year periods in 2019.

Also, if enough resources are available, an analysis will be carried out from this perspective of non-civil servant teaching staff who do not take part in the AQU Catalunya assessment processes by areas of knowledge, and the evolution of university recruitment by gender, analysing the evolution to reveal any trends.

### **33. Social equality**

Update the social equality report and include the social impact of the university, look at the replacement rate and see if we have improved professionally (social elevator).

### **34. Machine learning in assessment processes**

AQU Catalunya will continue to pilot the use of machine learning methodology in the assessment processes of teaching staff and degree programmes to see whether it is feasible to use it to optimise resources and to identify potential risks or areas of excellence more quickly.

### **35. Participation in other reports**

AQU Catalunya will collaborate in the preparation of articles and reports, such as the Report on the state of external quality assurance in Spanish universities.

## 2. COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

### ACTION AREA III. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER.

#### C. Knowledge transfer

##### 36. EUC Portal

AQU Catalunya will keep the EUC Studies portal, which integrates the results of the degree and institutional assessment processes and surveys coordinated by AQU, up to date.

The aim of the public section of the website is to present the quality of the degrees in a way that can be understood by stakeholders such as secondary school career guidance counsellors, prospective university students and their families; meanwhile, the private section is aimed at the Catalan university system, to facilitate the processes of monitoring and assessing degrees and centres.

In 2022, actions will be taken to better position the web organically in Internet search engines to make it easier for potentially interested people to consult it. It will be integrated with the ROC (register of Catalan universities) to ensure it is continuously and efficiently updated.

Moreover, the website will be kept up to date since it will include, in the private section, data on accreditation processes and comparative indicators and the use of the private section will be promoted as a tool to support assessment processes.

##### 37. Workshops and seminars

The seminars organised by AQU Catalunya, which are mainly aimed at the Catalan university community and the Catalan Administration, are spaces for knowledge exchange with the aim of promoting and reinforcing the culture of quality and continuous improvement in the Catalan university system.

6 seminars are planned for 2022 to present the results of the projects relating to Employers (3), Assessment of Teaching Assessment Manuals (1) and Institutional Assessment (2). As well as any others that AQU Catalunya may deem necessary to fulfil its activities.

In the framework of the SMART QUE project, a Policy Learning Forum will be organised, lasting 3 days, in which the dashboard of indicators will be shared with representatives of the university community and work will begin on the practical implementation of the indicators in the internal quality assurance systems of the universities.



### 38. Publications

AQU Catalunya publishes its own works (studies, reports, methodology) and disseminates these to stakeholders.

In 2022, it plans to publish 8 reports within the framework of the employers' project, 1 cross-cutting report and the assessment methodologies that will be approved.

## ACTION AREA V. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

### C. Communication tools

#### 39. Communication

The Agency will continue to communicate its actions, with the aim of increasing awareness in society of the quality of the Catalan university system, for the purposes of accountability and transparency, as well as to provide a service to future university students and their families. Support will be given to the media and efforts will be made to promote the Agency's presence in the media.

The following tools for the dissemination of AQU Catalunya's activities will be kept up to date during 2022:

##### *Website*

The AQU Catalunya website, which is the main tool for communicating the Agency's activities. Work will continue in 2022 to reinforce compliance with the accessibility requirements of AQU Catalunya's websites. Actions will be implemented to improve the positioning of the website in the main search engines.

##### *YouTube*

In 2015 AQU Catalunya opened a YouTube channel with the aim of increasing its social media presence and publicising its activities. This channel will be kept up to date with videos of the events organised by the Agency. Steps will be taken to ensure the new videos comply with accessibility regulations.

##### *Twitter*

AQU Catalunya has a corporate Twitter account which it uses to more directly communicate the activities it carries out, and also to share information from other agencies and organisations related to quality in higher education, access to the labour market and other issues considered of interest to subscribers. Twitter is used to reinforce and expand the information disseminated through the institutional website and will be kept up to date.

##### *eButlletí*

The four annual issues of EButlletí will be published –numbers 104 to 107–, AQU Catalunya's regular trilingual publication (Catalan, Spanish and English), which aims



to provide further information on the organisation's activities and projects and to express the opinions of the people involved.

*LinkedIn*

AQU Catalunya will share the publications and articles it publishes on this professional social network.

In the area of communications, the Agency's corporate image will also be kept up to date and current.

## 3. COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

### ACTION AREA V. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

This encompasses all the activities that AQU Catalunya carries out to maintain the strategic focus of its activities and to establish the relevant alliances with the different agents with which it may maintain relations.

#### A. Strategic management

##### 40. Governing and assessment bodies

AQU Catalunya is accountable for the performance of its functions and activities to the different governing bodies that establish and supervise its activities, which are the Governing Board and the Permanent Committee. These bodies are also responsible for approving the documents governing the functioning of the Agency.

The Agency will manage the work of the Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee, the Research Assessment Committee and the Appeals Committees, as well as any specific delegated committees, to ensure their smooth functioning.

##### 41. Advisory bodies

The Agency will meet with the Advisory Committee, which is the consultative body that collaborates with the Agency in advising on strategies, defining and improving procedures and drawing up proposals for action, with the aim of guaranteeing the quality of the Agency's activities, in accordance with international benchmarks.

It will also meet with the different advisory committees that make up the Catalan universities in order to jointly ensure the quality of the Catalan university system, such as: the Committee of Vice-Chancellors responsible for quality and academic organisation, the Committee of heads of technical quality units, the Committee of secretaries of the social councils of the Catalan public universities and contact people from private universities, the Students Committee and the Technical Surveys Committee.

##### 42. The AQU Catalunya Strategic Plan

AQU Catalunya will continue to implement the 2019- 2022 Strategic Plan, which includes the following strategic lines: Developing actions with innovative elements that have an impact on the Catalan university system: Facilitating access to quantitative and qualitative data, in an integrated way, to improve the quality of the Catalan university system; Strengthening our international position and that of the Catalan university system;

Maintaining the expertise of staff and outsiders, so that they remain committed to their activity and are able to cope with change; and Having the financial and human resources and adequate space to follow through with the planned activities.

It will also draw up the Agency's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, which will take into account the challenges and needs of the Catalan university system over the next four years.

#### **43. Assessment according to European Standards and Guidelines**

In 2022 AQU Catalunya will carry out the fourth external assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

As a result of this assessment, AQU Catalunya will apply to remain in the ENQA network of agencies and in the European EQAR register.

Also as a result of this assessment, AQU Catalunya will draw up a plan of actions for improvement to be introduced over the next five years.

#### **44. Drafting of the programme contract with the Generalitat de Catalunya**

Law 15/2015 of 21 July on AQU Catalunya stipulates that the Agency's relations with the Catalan Government are governed by means of a programme contract that must include, at least, the objectives, the funding linked to the results obtained and the instruments for monitoring its activity.

In 2022, AQU will move forward with the drafting of the programme contract.

#### **45. 2030 Agenda**

AQU Catalunya collaborates with the Ministry of Research and Universities in achieving the 2030 Agenda in the areas of strategy and governance, education and teaching, and research and transfer.

#### **46. Experts and advisors**

These are individuals of recognised standing in the academic and/or professional sphere and also members of the student body who take part in AQU Catalunya's assessment processes, taking into account criteria of independence, objectivity and absence of conflict of interest, as well as requirements of ability and merit previously established by the assessment committees. These individuals are the cornerstone of the assessment processes and are appointed to carry out the functions for which they have been selected.

During 2022, efforts will be made to continue to count on the support of an adequate number of experts and, where possible, to increase the number of international experts. In particular, efforts will be made to involve international students.



The Agency will ensure their skills are kept up to date through continuous training courses that will be organised during the year. To reinforce training, online and audiovisual content will be updated and surveys will be carried out to detect areas for improvement in the training of experts.

In the case of students, agreements will be signed with universities to train students in quality assurance. In parallel, the Agency will also collaborate with CEUCAT to organise training course for university students.



## ACTION AREA VI. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

### A. Accountability, transparency and modernisation

#### 47. Accountability and transparency of the actions carried out

The Government and Parliament of Catalonia will be informed of the evolution of the quality of teaching, research and innovation in the Catalan university system and the quality of higher education institutions. The AQU Catalunya transparency portal will be kept up to date and the AQU Catalunya Annual Report will be drawn up and approved by the AQU Catalunya Governing Board and published on the Agency's website.

#### 48. Transparency portal

In accordance with the principles and obligations set out in Law 19/2014, of 29 December, on transparency, access to public information and good governance, the Agency will keep AQU Catalunya's transparency portal up to date.

#### 49. Digital administration

AQU Catalunya will continue to progressively fulfil the requirements of digital administration. In 2022, the organisation will consolidate the use of digital administration tools in the institutional and degree assessment processes and in the registry.

### B. Internal management

#### 50. Finances, accounting and tax management

Work will be done to strengthen the financial management of projects, with the aim of ensuring the most efficient and effective budget management possible, in accordance with the current economic situation. Furthermore, and in accordance with the provisions of article 71 of the Law on Public Finances, as amended by Law 7/2011 of 27 July, the annual audit will be carried out by the company awarded the contract by the AQU Catalunya Governing Board, and the recommendations and actions for improvement described in the latest audits will be implemented.

AQU will be accountable for the current budget year, producing and submitting regular reports as required to comply with current regulations. And efforts will be made to improve accountability to society on economic issues.

During the 2022 financial year, AQU Catalunya will work to integrate economic management processes with public procurement. It will also work to define its analytical accounting, in

accordance with the requirements of the Generalitat de Catalunya. The budgeting system will be reinforced and efforts to simplify and digitalise processes will continue.

### 51. Legal activity

The agreements, reports and resolutions necessary for the operation of the Agency's activities will be drawn up.

AQU Catalunya will continue to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation in order to strengthen the Agency's compliance with personal data protection regulations. Compliance will be monitored using the processes of the quality and information security management system.

### 52. Procurement

AQU Catalunya will participate in the management procedure for administrative procurement processes as appropriate, as well as in the pilot plan to implement the Electronic Procurement File Manager in public sector entities.

AQU Catalunya's administrative procurement procedure will be kept up to date during 2022.

### 53. Quality management and information security system

The quality management and information security systems certified under ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 27001:2013 standards will continue to underpin the Agency's continuous improvement process, through internal and external audits, management of indicators, action plan monitoring, meta-assessment processes and internal and external feedback mechanisms.

In 2022:

- The ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 quality and security management system certificates will be monitored in order to keep the certifications up to date.
- A quarter of the procedures and documents that form part of the Management System will be reviewed.
- Improvements will be made to indicator management applications with annual targets.
- Improvement actions will be managed jointly using the internal application.
- A risk review will be carried out on AQU Catalunya's processes.

AQU Catalunya will maintain the project monitoring system in place to ensure that projects are implemented in accordance with the planned objectives and timetable.

## C. Information and Communication Technologies

### 54. Software developments

Applications will be designed, developed and implemented to support AQU Catalunya's assessment and knowledge generation and transfer processes. Specifically:

- The development of the management tool for assessing degrees and centres (Talassa) will continue, in modular form, and will be deployed for use.
- The teaching staff assessment management programme will be adapted so that the calls for applications for assessment can be managed as a process that is open all year round.
- SEO actions will continue to help improve the positioning of AQU Catalunya's websites, especially the EUC portal.
- Accessibility to AQU Catalunya's websites will be improved.
- Existing applications will be maintained and, in particular, the library of the teaching staff file management application (NEXUS) will be updated.

### 55. IT systems

In the area of IT systems, the administration, management and operation of technological infrastructures will continue to be carried out in accordance with AQU Catalunya's needs, with the aim of optimising them, making them more efficient and becoming more self-reliant.

In addition, the regulations and procedures for improving information security, in line with ISO 27002 controls, will be worked on.

The necessary investments in hardware and software will be made to keep the technology and infrastructure up to date at AQU Catalunya's new headquarters.

The following main actions will be carried out in 2022:

- Compliance with the controls specified in ISO:27002 on information security.
- Renewal of computers and servers.
- Necessary upgrades to keep technological infrastructures fully up to date, secure and at the right scale.
- Support for AQU Catalunya users (incidents, queries and requests).

## D. General services

### 56. General services

AQU Catalunya will continue to assume the obligations and management of the general services for the building which has housed the current headquarters since 2020, since it is

the entity that occupies the majority of the building. In 2022, a five-year lease extension will be signed until 2027.

Of particular importance in general services are all those actions to be taken in the area of business coordination to ensure appropriate workplace safety and risk prevention conditions.

AQU Catalunya will also maintain in good condition the spaces provided by the Ministry of the Economy that are used for storage.

In 2022 business coordination activities will be carried out with the tenant companies of the Enric Granados 33 building and with the suppliers that provide services at AQU Catalunya's headquarters, reinforcing the occupational health and safety and business coordination service.

## 57. Customer service

AQU Catalunya's customer service is provided through different channels:

- Face-to-face service. In accordance with the safety and hygiene measures related to the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus, this arrangement will be limited to exceptional cases which cannot be provided in any other way.
- Customer Service mailboxes. Queries are reviewed daily and responded to within 48 hours.
- Emails. Queries are reviewed daily and responded to within 48 hours.

Reception and registration may be limited during 2022, depending on actions to be taken to ensure safety and risk prevention.

## 4. COMMITMENT TO ALLIANCES

### ACTION AREA V. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

#### B. External relations

##### 58. Institutional relations and social agents in Catalonia

The Agency will continue to coordinate with different bodies and entities of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the administrations of Catalonia, where there are common interests.

Institutional relations will also be maintained with agents representing Catalan civil society, to incorporate their perspective in the Agency's activities and to involve them in assessment processes by requesting help in the search for professional experts.

The Agency will continue to collaborate with the Open University of Catalonia to offer the Master's Degree in Quality Assessment and Management in Higher Education, which is the first training programme in this field in a language other than English, and which aims to train professionals and experts in quality in higher education.

##### 59. Relations with the State

The Agency will cooperate with quality agencies operating in Spain, both within the framework of REACU (Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies) and bilaterally.

Relations will also be established with other agencies or bodies operating in the State and pursuing common objectives, such as organising seminars around common areas.

Further progress will be made to achieve the recognition of the brackets assessed by the AQU Catalunya's Research Assessment Committee by the National Research Activity Assessment Committee (ANECA).

If it is feasible in terms of resources, requests for assessments from outside the Catalan university system that may be requested by any state agencies or universities will be responded to. These will be carried out under agreements and will be externally funded.

##### 60. International relations

AQU Catalunya will cooperate, mainly in the European sphere, with agencies and bodies that share the same objectives, in order to develop relevant projects that bring added value to the Catalan university system.

Specifically, AQU Catalunya will maintain relations with ENQA, as a full member, and will participate more actively in the working groups it promotes, such as:

- **Microcredentials (ongoing, started in 2021)**

AQU Catalunya is a member of this working group, whose overall objective is to analyse the requirements related to the quality assurance of microcredentials taking into account the ESG factors.

- **ENQA Agency Review Committee (ongoing, started in 2021)**

AQU Catalunya is a member of the Agency Review Committee (ARC). The ARC is a newly created body that performs internal quality assurance of the assessments of ENQA member agencies. The key task of this committee is to review assessment reports to verify that they meet ENQA quality standards and contain the necessary evidence to assess ESG compliance; and support ENQA in the process of reviewing and improving the assessments of ENQA member agencies.

AQU Catalunya will also cooperate with the European Quality Assurance Agency Register (EQAR), which is a register only eligible to those agencies that, by means of an international external assessment, demonstrate compliance with the European Criteria and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. In this regard, AQU Catalunya will continue to support EQAR in order to promote the DEQAR CONNECT project, which aims to help other European agencies to incorporate the reports into the EQAR database.

AQU Catalunya has been registered in the EQAR register since 5 December 2008, making it one of the first three agencies to be listed there.

## 61. INQAAHE

AQU Catalunya will continue as a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which is an international association of almost every organisation involved in quality assurance in higher education, most of which are quality assurance agencies. And it will provide support to ensure its successful establishment in Barcelona.

## ACTION AREA IV. INTERNATIONALISATION

### A. International projects

This area includes all the projects and activities that AQU Catalunya carries out in the international arena.

## 62. Participation in international projects

AQU Catalunya carries out its activities following international benchmarks and promotes joint actions with higher education institutions, other national and international agencies and organisations, and participates in projects internationally.

In 2022, AQU Catalunya will continue to participate in the SMART-QUE and Employability in Programme Development (EPD) projects.

AQU Catalunya will participate in new projects in the international arena if there are sufficient resources available.

## B. International assessments and exchanges

Another aspect of the international action area is the performance of international assessments and exchanges. This includes the following:

### 63. Programme for Foreign centres offering degrees in Catalonia

Transnational teaching is one of the variants of the internationalisation of higher education, and assuring their quality is one of AQU Catalunya's functions. Teaching institutions that wish to offer courses leading to degrees awarded by foreign institutions that cannot be recognised as official degrees in Catalonia must be assessed by the Agency before being authorised by the Catalan Government.

AQU Catalunya, at the behest of the Generalitat de Catalunya, will assess foreign institutions wishing to offer degrees in Catalonia in order to demonstrate that they are of sufficient quality to do so.

In 2022, this activity will depend on the requests that the Generalitat de Catalunya processes with the Agency.

### 64. International Institutional Accreditation Programme with AQU Catalunya

This programme enables AQU Catalunya to accredit centres located in foreign countries that demonstrate academic excellence, in accordance with the characteristics of their environment, and which, from an international perspective, are reliable in terms of international academic cooperation and mobility, particularly with universities in the Catalan University System.

The assessment methodology for this programme will be reviewed in 2022 and the performance of assessments will be subject to the availability of resources. Assessments carried out in this area are externally funded.

## 65. Degree Accreditation Programme

In the context of a framework agreement, AQU Catalunya can provide support in the issuing of preliminary reports or the carrying out of external visits to degree programmes, following the assessment methodology of the Framework for the verification, monitoring, modification and accreditation of official degrees adapted to the characteristics and context of the country in which the assessment is being carried out. In the case of inter-university programmes, the conditions for the recognition of accreditation of international inter-university programmes in accordance with the European Approach will apply.

Assessments carried out in this area are externally funded, with the exception of inter-university programmes with Catalan degrees.

With the exception of inter-university programmes with Catalan degrees, in 2022 these assessments will depend on the availability of resources.

## 66. Exchanges

AQU Catalunya will actively participate in meetings, forums and projects that add value to the Catalan university system as a whole and that disseminate and raise awareness about activities in the international arena, in order to keep abreast of developments in the field of quality. The aim is to increase its participation in these forums.

In this regard, it also plans to organise international webinars to disseminate the projects it is carrying out.



## 5. COMMITMENT TO THE WORKPLACE

### ACTION AREA VI. INTERNAL ORGANISATION

#### B. Internal management

##### 67. Human resources management

The Agency will take into account the recommendations on human resources established within the framework of the civil service which apply to it, including those related to working hours, employment conditions, remuneration and recruitment of staff recruitment, among others.

In addition, AQU will continue to deploy remote working in 2022.

Actions will be taken in the following areas related to human resources:

##### *Selection and recruitment*

In 2022, AQU Catalunya will continue to follow its Human Resources Policy approved in 2019 and manage the ordinary and extraordinary calls for applications of its Public Employment Offer, while finalising the extraordinary calls for applications.

To comply with the 2022 Action Plan, AQU Catalunya needs to recruit the following staff:

Number of vacancies	Area	Type of contract
1 senior technician	Management-Legal advice	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
1 senior technician	Management-Communications	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
2 senior technicians	Internationalisation and Knowledge Generation	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
3 senior technicians	Quality Assessment	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
1 management technician	Developer	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled

1 management technician	Administration	Temporary
2 management technicians	Quality Assessment	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
1 Admin assistant	Management-Reception and Registration	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
2 Admin assistants	Administration	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled
2 Admin assistants	Teaching staff assessment	Substitution until the vacancy is definitively filled

For the identified vacancies, a request will be sent to the Catalan Government to fill them on an interim basis until they are definitively filled, in accordance with the established procedure.

### *Training and knowledge management*

AQU Catalunya will continue to deploy its Training Plan, which is aimed at developing the professional skills of the Agency's staff.

Activities will continue to be carried out to enable knowledge management and exchange at AQU Catalunya.

### *Implementation of eWorking*

Once we have settled into the new normal, AQU Catalunya will promote the approval and development of the Agency's eWorking format, following the instructions issued in this area by the Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

### *Gender*

The Equality Plan will be approved, the main objective of which is to achieve equal treatment and opportunities for women and men in the Agency, in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 3/2017, of 22 March, for the effective equality of women and men, and Law 17/2015, of 21 July, for the effective equality of women and men.

### *Assessment of professional skills*

The professional skills of AQU Catalunya staff will be assessed annually for training purposes.

### *Setting of annual objectives*

The common, area and personal objectives of AQU Catalunya staff will be established in accordance with the legal framework and monitored accordingly to ensure that they are met.

### *Occupational health and safety*

Throughout the year, maintenance will be carried out in the field of occupational health and safety and the necessary health surveillance actions will be carried in relation to the Agency's staff.